

A child who **NEEDS** glasses

When a parent finds out that their child needs to wear glasses, they might experience feeling upset or being overwhelmed.

Parents who have gone through this process, recommend finding a paediatric ophthalmologist they and their child are both comfortable with.

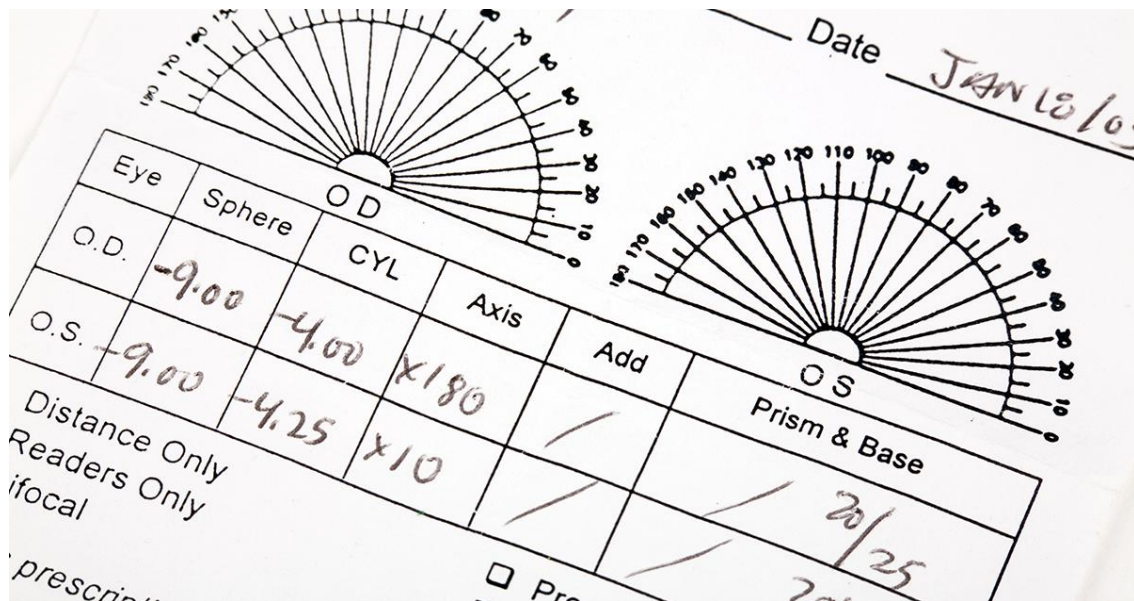
It's also vital for them to connect with other parents online or in their community to share tips and experiences.



Why children might need glasses

- To improve vision and help the child to function better in his environment
- To help straighten eyes that are crossed or misaligned, which is a condition called strabismus
- To help strengthen a weak or "lazy" eye
- To protect one eye if the child has poor vision in the other

The AAPOS (American Association for Paediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus) says it's important to remember that during early childhood, a child's visual system is growing and developing, and glasses can help ensure normal vision development.



How to read a child's glasses prescription

One of the most important steps for a parent is to learn how to read their child's prescription. It will help them understand their vision.

Prescription charts typically have two rows labelled one for your Right Eye (O.D.) and one for your Left Eye (O.S)

Sometimes one will see the prescription O.D. and O.S. which are abbreviations for Latin words that mean Right eye and Left eye.

From left to right on the top row of the prescription one might see SPH, CYL, and AXIS.

It is important to note that there **may not be** a value entered for these categories, if that is the case there is no correction needed.

SPH stands for spherical power and describes the degree of nearsightedness or farsightedness.

A positive value, or a prescription with a plus-sign (+), means that the child is farsighted. If one sees a negative value (-) that means the child is nearsighted.

In general, the further away from zero the number on a child's prescription, the more spectacle correction needed and the stronger the script.

- + : farsighted, or longsighted prescription: hyperopia.
- - : nearsighted, or shortsighted prescription: myopia.
- 0, Pl, or Plano : no error

Cylinder is the measure of astigmatism - simply put, the front of the eye is not completely round but has more of a rugby ball shape.

A person with astigmatism does not see clearly either at distance or at near which can result in blurry vision & sometimes cause headaches.

For some prescriptions there will be no astigmatism correction for one or both eyes. An eye doctor may just write the sphere power alone, or may use abbreviations like sph ("sphere") or DS ("diopters sphere").

If there is a CYL number, there will also be an axis number.

The axis indicates the orientation of astigmatism and is measured in degrees from 1 to 180

ADD stands for addition and is used with multifocal lenses (i.e bifocals). If a child needs bifocals, there will be a number here. ADD is additional magnification which helps with vision at close range.

PRISM is used to help people with muscular imbalance in their eyes. Prisms can help to reduce eyestrain and correct double vision.

P.D., or Pupillary Distance, is the distance between the centre of the pupils, which is used to position the lenses in the frames.

Pupil distance is measured in two ways :

Binocular which is a pupil-to-pupil measurement, this type of measurement will be between 42-60 mm for most children

Monocular which is a per-eye measurement from the pupil to the middle of the face - example : 25/24.5 - the first number (25) is for the right eye (O.D.) and the second number (24.5) is for the left eye (O.S.) - total these together to get 49.5 binocular



Choosing the right glasses

Fortunately, children's glasses have come a long way in terms of colour choices and durability. Let the child choose the colour they want. Ensure that a durable paediatric frame is used and that it is sized appropriately. Most optical stores have wonderful options.

It would be wise to avoid wire frames, especially in active children. They might look nice, but can bend easily. Plastic frames are a much wiser choice. One has to realise that a child might chew, drop or even sit on their frame.

To find the best fit, the AAPOS recommends working with an optician who has plenty of experience with children. Well-fitting frames will be comfortable and the eye will be centered in the middle of the lens. The AAPOS also suggests opting for polycarbonate lenses because they are shatterproof -- a quality that will come in handy on the playground for sure.

How to correctly fit glasses onto a Child's face



Getting a Child to wear glasses

"For the most part, if a child needs glasses she'll wear them, because kids like to see the world clearly," says Lauren S. Blieden, M.D., a cornea specialist and comprehensive ophthalmologist at the Robert Cizik Eye Clinic and assistant clinical professor at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. However, age can play a role in how tough of a sell the specs are. "Babies are usually okay with glasses because they don't know any better. Toddlers can be difficult, though," says Laura K. Green, M.D., a pediatric ophthalmologist at the Krieger Eye Institute and director of the ophthalmology residency program at Sinai Hospital of Baltimore. "Glasses are very well accepted among elementary school kids (in South African language, that's primary school children). In fact, we sometimes have kids coming in claiming that their vision is blurry just because they want glasses," she says.

If a child is resistant, a parent needs to take a strong, pro-glasses stance. Just like always riding in a car seat or booster, or holding an adult's hand to cross the street, "wearing glasses needs to be expected and nonnegotiable," says Dr. Green. "If a child under age 5 doesn't wear his glasses as prescribed by the doctor, there can be permanent vision consequences."



5 Ways to Get a Child to Love wearing their glasses (for parents)

1. FIND FRAMES THEY LOVE

Letting a child have a say in which frames they wear will make them feel even more empowered and excited to wear them. In addition to looking good, make sure the frames fit comfortably (as per the above link).

2. START SLOWLY

Try introducing their new glasses for shorter periods of time (and preferably during activities they enjoy). Do they have a favorite cartoon or movie that they watch over and over? Explain how they'll be able to see everything so much better with their glasses! Building positive experiences with their new frames will make them want to wear them more and more.

3. SHOW THEM HOW COOL GLASSES CAN BE

Seek out and share TV shows, movies, cartoons, books and games where the characters wear glasses! Even look for pictures of their favourite celebrities wearing glasses in their everyday lives. We naturally want to emulate the people we admire, so showing them that their favorite singer or actress wears glasses will go a long way!

4. PRACTICE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Did your child put on their glasses without having to be asked? Or sit through a long eye exam without a complaint? Let them know what a good job they are doing and reward them with a favourite treat, game or experience. You won't believe how quickly they'll want to wear their glasses again!

5. BE A STICKLER

If your child is old enough to understand, explain to them why they need to wear their glasses for their own health and safety. If they're too young to be reasoned with, try making wearing their glasses a seamless part of their daily routine (that can't be compromised), like wearing a seatbelt or brushing their teeth. Soon they'll approach wearing glasses as just another thing they do without even thinking about it!

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