

# Let the Buyer Beware: A Closer Look at Ordering Eyeglasses Online

*American Optometric Association strongly advises purchasing from your local optometrist*

**St. Louis, Mo. (Aug. 7, 2014)** — Purchasing eyeglasses online may offer convenience to consumers, but the American Optometric Association (AOA) warns that the consequences of making an incorrect or uninformed purchase could cost patients more time and money in the long run.

The AOA stresses that eyeglasses are an investment in your health and must be custom-fitted not only to be comfortable, but also to meet particular prescriptive needs, which only an eye doctor can determine.

“Without visiting an eye doctor, patients run the risk of purchasing eyeglasses online with an improper fit or receiving the wrong prescription altogether,” said Samuel D. Pierce, O.D., member of the AOA Board of Trustees and AOA spokesperson. “Ultimately, patients can expend more time dealing with order mistakes and making returns than had they simply visited their local optometrist in the first place.”

An AOA study published in 2011 with the Optical Laboratories Association and The Vision Council reinforces the drawbacks of online orders. The study concluded:

- Of 200 glasses ordered online, only 154 pairs were received;
- 44.8 percent had incorrect prescriptions or safety issues;
- 29 percent had at least one lens fail to meet required prescription;
- 19 percent of adult lenses failed impact resistance testing; and,
- 25 percent of children’s lenses failed impact resistance testing.

Purchasing eyeglasses from a local optometrist is the AOA’s first and foremost recommendation, but if patients are still interested in making a purchase online, the AOA warns consumers to do their homework before making a final decision.

“If a consumer believes that ordering a pair of glasses online is in their best interest, it is important for the consumer to be fully informed regarding the potential pitfalls in doing so,” Dr. Pierce said. “The peer-reviewed study revealed that nearly half of all glasses ordered online had either prescription errors or failed to meet minimum safety standards. Personally, I find that very scary. Patients deserve better than that.”

The AOA advises patients to consider the following factors before making a purchase online:

## **The fit and material of the eyeglasses**

How the eyeglasses fit is critically important — if the fit is incorrect, not only can a patient experience discomfort, such as pinching and headaches, but can also cause additional vision problems.

Consumers also need to consider the various options available for the lenses, and what is best for their particular prescription and lifestyle. Lenses come in various materials, such as traditional plastic, as well as thinner, lighter materials. Other considerations are the different coatings and treatments available such as non-glare coatings and photochromic lenses.

## **The accuracy of the prescription**

Just because the eyeglasses “look right” on a person’s face doesn’t mean the measurements are correct, the AOA warns. Pupil distance (PD) determines where to place the center of each lens in your frames to customize the optics to your eyes. This measurement is necessary to ensure the eyeglasses serve your vision needs properly.

Consumers need an optometrist to provide the PD and ensure precise measurements. However, the PD is not part of your prescription and not normally provided unless you ask for it. Your optometrist or optician can even legitimately charge for the service of providing your PD. The measurements needed for multifocals can only be accurately made once the frame is selected and properly fitted to your face, so typically this measurement is simply estimated for eyeglasses available online.

### **The retailer's policies on purchases**

- **Returns:** What is the website's return policy if you are not satisfied with your purchase? How will the website deal with issues of prescription inaccuracies or other mistakes (wrong lenses coatings, wrong color, etc)?
- **Warrantees:** Does the online retailer offers protection against lens scratching, how long this may be covered and what needs to be done to replace scratched lenses. How long is the frame warranty? What about children's frames?
- **Shipping:** The cost and timeliness of shipments varies. Who pays for shipping returns?
- **Pricing:** Are protective eyeglass cases and cleaning cloths included, or are they "extras" added to the cost?
- **Insurance:** Some websites do not accept vision insurance. If you have a Flexible Spending Account (FSA), check to see what's required to accept this as payment.
- **Maintenance:** Some websites provide a contact for this and may offer online tips for minor adjustments, but it might mean shipping your glasses away and being without them until the service is completed and they are returned.

For more in-depth detail about factors to consider before purchasing eyeglasses online, click [here](#) to read a brochure offered by the AOA.

As the leaders of primary eye care in the United States, doctors of optometry are crucial in helping patients achieve optimum eye health and vision, and are the best resource to offer the highest quality eyeglasses. To learn more about eye care and find an eye doctor near you, visit [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org).

#### ***About the American Optometric Association (AOA):***

*The American Optometric Association, a federation of state, student and armed forces optometric associations, was founded in 1898. Today, the AOA is proud to represent the profession of optometry, America's family eye doctors, who take a leading role in an individual's overall eye and vision care, health and well-being. Doctors of optometry (ODs) are the independent primary health care professionals for the eye and have extensive, ongoing training to examine, diagnose, treat and manage disorders, diseases and injuries that affect the eye and visual system, providing two-thirds of primary eye care in the U.S. For information on a variety of eye health and vision topics, and to find an optometrist near you, visit [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org).*