



EYEWEAR FOR KIDS

Shopping for Safety, Fit and Fashion

It's a common scenario: you start to notice that your child is blinking and squinting frequently, sitting only inches away from the screen during TV time, and holding that book a little too close to their face while reading.



Being an aware parent, you know that vision problems can hinder your child's development, so you schedule their annual eye examination. The exam ends with the doctor handing you a prescription for the necessary eyewear. Like one in four school age children, your child has a problem with their vision.¹

What type of eyewear should you and your little one shop for? Not only are there tons of styles out there, but there's also lots of technical considerations for fitting and maintaining your child's eyewear. Whether your tyke is a current eyeglass wearer or new, here are the shopping tips to get them looking spiffy in their specs:

Frames: Find Fortitude

Shop for strong frames that can stand up to your child's active lifestyle. The two main frame material options are metal and plastic. Plastic frames were once known as the sturdier choice for children, although modern innovations have leveled the two frame materials as equals. In fact, hypoallergenic metals like titanium and stainless steel are great for kids because they are strong and can sustain lots of wear and tear. Another current invention on the market, memory metal frames bend freely and will retain their shape after pulling and mistreatment. Your vision provider will suggest the best frame type for your child and the lenses being prescribed.

Lenses: Seek Safety and Strength

Safety is first when it comes to lenses. Most vision experts agree that polycarbonate is the best lens material not only for its impact resistance (often called "shatter proof"), but for its durability and light weight. Plus, polycarbonate lenses are manufactured with scratch coating and are UV resistant. Many vision providers will only prescribe polycarbonate lenses for children's eyeglasses.

Target the Total Fit

Sure, the frame and lenses are important, but adding in the right features can equal fitting perfection. Carefully constructed eyeglasses are virtually useless if they are sliding off your child's face. Frames that are too tight can cause pain. Talk to your eye care professional about how the

below features can give your child's eyeglasses just the right fit:

- Adjustable nose pads and Saddle bridges: Great for fitting smaller noses, these will help keep the glasses on your youngster's face and make them more comfortable.
- Cable temples: Unlike traditional temples, these wrap all the way around the back of the ear and help keep eyeglasses stable. They are a good choice for full-time eyeglass wearers; however, care should be used when removing eyeglasses. Traditional temples might be a better choice for youngsters who remove their eyeglasses frequently.
- Spring hinges: These allow the frame temples to be pulled outwards while eyeglasses are being put on, without causing damage. Usually recommended for children who frequently put on/remove eyeglasses. Spring hinges can be a worthwhile investment that can help you save money on eyeglass repairs for rough and tumble children.

To Contact or Not to Contact

Contact lenses and young children don't normally mix. This has always been the traditional wisdom that kept many optometrists from prescribing contact lenses to younger children, except for specific vision conditions or involvement in certain sports. However, a recent study demonstrated that 9 out of 10 children (ages 8-11) could apply and remove daily disposables without their parents' help.² If a youngster is set on contact lenses and can commit to the high level of care and cleanliness that they demand, parental oversight and frequent eye checks are a must.

Add a backup pair of eyeglasses to the list as well.

Fashionably Focused

Long gone are the days where glasses meant geeky. In fact, glasses can be downright hip. Trends abound for the many young eyeglass wearers out there. Today's fashion forward frames that include pop-culture icons themes and removable charms can make hesitant kids comfortable, and even excited, with eyeglasses. And that means they will be more likely to wear them.

Additional Shopping Tips:

- All eyeglass wearers should have a replacement pair of eyeglasses since breakages can occur, especially with active children.
- If your child plays sports, safety glasses consisting of polycarbonate lenses and safety sports frames should be used. A standard metal or plastic frame will not suffice as sports eyewear and can be dangerous.
- Don't expect a child to grow into their eyeglasses. Make sure they fit your child like a glove before you take them home.
- Ask about scratch warranties which will replace scratched lenses with new ones. This could be a small investment with significant benefits if your child is rough on their glasses.



^{1/} "Common Eye Problems in Children," Prevent Blindness America Website, 2005 (Jan.2011). <http://www.preventblindness.org/children/index.html>

^{2/} "Daily Disposable Contact Lens Wear in Myopic Children, Optometry and Vision Science Web Site, 2004 (Jan. 2011). http://journals.lww.com/optvissci/Fulltext/2004/04000/The_Effectiveness_of_Occluder_Contact_Lenses_in.11.aspx