



# Buying prescription glasses and contact lenses online

## How to manage the risks and what to look out for

Independent consumer research has shown that it may be in your best interests to buy your prescription glasses and contact lenses in the same place as you had your sight test. This is because you can discuss your particular needs with eye-care professionals who have your clinical records and so know about your eyes. They will also be experts on which frames and lenses suit your prescription and lifestyle.

With more complex prescriptions, such as high prescriptions or varifocals, or if there are large differences between each eye, it's especially important that accurate measurements are taken to properly centre the lenses for your eyes, as this helps make sure your vision is as clear as possible and the glasses don't cause eye strain or headaches.

For these reasons, we'd always recommend that you buy your glasses or contact lenses from an optical practice, also known as an opticians. However, after a sight test, you are free to buy them wherever you choose. If you do decide to buy them online instead, our advice below is designed to help you avoid suppliers who are unregulated and who could be selling poor-quality products or those which don't fit properly.

### What to consider when buying glasses or contact lenses online

#### 1 Fitting

Glasses and contact lenses can be harmful if they aren't fitted and cared for properly. For example, contact lenses carry a greater risk of eye infections if you don't

use them correctly. In some rare cases, these infections can cause permanent damage to the eye or even blindness. Also, if you buy glasses online you may end up paying more if you then need to pay to have them properly adjusted at your local optical practice. Always get your glasses or contact lenses fitted by an eye-care professional, and have regular check-ups with an optometrist.

#### 2 Research your supplier

Do your research. Only buy from a reputable supplier who has good reviews and is genuinely based in the UK. Some suppliers that use UK contact details and have prices in sterling are actually registered overseas, and don't follow the UK rules that protect your safety.

#### 3 Overseen by a professional

Make sure the supplier you buy contact lenses from uses a registered eye-care professional to oversee the sale. If they don't, they're not keeping to UK law.

**Continued overleaf**

#### About the AOP

The Association of Optometrists (AOP) is the leading representative membership organisation for optometrists in the UK. We support over 82% of practising optometrists, to fulfil their professional roles to protect the nation's eye health. For more information, visit [www.aop.org.uk](http://www.aop.org.uk)

## 4 Contact lens specification

If your online supplier is based in the UK, they should check that you have a valid contact lens specification (the details you need to be able to order your lenses). Your specification is provided by your optometrist, contact lens optician or medical practitioner and is valid until your next sight test is due (between one and two years). This is a UK legal requirement to protect your eye health.

## 5 Glasses for children

Children's glasses can only be supplied by, or under the supervision of, a registered optometrist, medical practitioner or dispensing optician, so they should not be available to buy online. This is because an inaccurate prescription or glasses that don't fit properly can lead to permanently damaged vision in children — especially if their eyes are still developing.

## 6 Know your rights

Before you buy contact lenses or glasses online, make sure you know your rights and the company's returns policy.

## Looking after your eyes

It is important you visit your optometrist regularly. They will always check that your eyes are healthy as part of your sight test. This will help protect your sight and identify any conditions early, when treatment is likely to be more effective.

We recommend that you have a sight test at least every two years, or more often if your optometrist recommends this.

You can find more information on eye health on our website at [www.aop.org.uk/patients](http://www.aop.org.uk/patients).

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