



Pupillary Distance

The Pupillary Distance (PD) is the measurement from the centre of one of your pupils to the centre of the other. It is one of the measurements needed to make sure that your spectacles fit you properly, and that you can see clearly and comfortably through the lenses. It ensures that the centre of each spectacle lens matches up with the centre of each of your pupils.

Taking this measurement is not part of an eye examination, but is one of several measurements that will be taken by the dispensing optician when he or she measures you up for new spectacles. The cost of taking these measurements is included in the cost of the spectacles.

Why is the PD not part of the eye examination?

Your eye examination will determine the prescription you need to see clearly and comfortably, but will not include the measurements needed to ensure that spectacles fit you correctly. There are several measurements that are required if you are having new spectacles. These include:

- the frame width to make sure this is suitable for your head and your prescription;
- the bridge width to make sure that the frame fits you well across your nose;
- the distance from the back of the lens to your eye (the back vertex distance, or BVD). This is needed if your prescription is relatively strong and will be written on your prescription. The dispensing optician will measure it with the frame you choose for your spectacles, and if it is different from the BVD on your prescription an adjustment will be made to your prescription;

- the height of your pupils in relation to the top (or bottom) of the frame that you have chosen. This is needed if you have a relatively strong prescription, or if you choose to have aspheric lenses, where the lens prescription varies from the centre of the lens to the outside of it to make the lens thinner and lighter. It is also needed if you decide to have varifocals or bifocals to make sure that the lenses sit in the correct position on your face;
- the length of the sides of the frames to make sure they are the right length for you;
- the angle of tilt of the frame to make sure the frame tilts forward on your face by the correct amount.

All of these measurements relate to the frame you have chosen and so will be done by the person who dispenses your spectacles.

Because dispensing spectacles involves taking several measurements of which the PD is just one, there is no need for the optometrist to measure it as part of an eye examination, as these measurements will be done by whoever measures you up for your spectacles. These dispensing measurements will be included in the price of your spectacles, as part of the professional service.



I want to get my spectacles online, and I have been told that my PD is required for this.

The College believes that it is in your best interests that you have spectacles that fit you properly, and are positioned correctly in front of your eyes. We do not advise that you buy spectacles from a source that does not ensure that this is the case (College Guidance F3.11). In addition to this, the Opticians Act (s.27(3B)) requires that the seller of the optical appliance 'makes arrangements' for the buyer to receive aftercare 'in so far as, and for so long as, may be reasonable in his particular case', so if you purchase your spectacles online you should enquire how this is to be done. This may be by having an agreement with a local optical practice to provide this service for you.

Will getting my spectacles online do me any harm?

If they do not fit you properly your spectacles may be too tight or too loose. This may be uncomfortable and your vision may not be clear because you may be looking through an incorrect area of the lens. The other problem is that you may not be looking through the horizontal or vertical centre of the lenses which can cause eyestrain and/or headaches.

While these symptoms by themselves will not cause you any long-term damage, it is clearly important that if you are doing any safety-critical tasks such as driving, that you do so with the best possible vision.

My optometrist has told me that he can measure my PD, but I will have to pay for this. Is this right?

The measuring of your PD, like other professional measurements, is a private service for which a fee may be charged. However, you should bear in mind that as other measurements will also be needed to ensure that your new spectacles fit you properly, and that these will be included in the price of the spectacles, it would normally be better to get these all done at once by the person who supplies your spectacles.

Why are spectacles so much more expensive on the high street compared to online?

If you are comparing the prices of spectacles online compared with those on the high street you should ensure that you are comparing like with like. If you get your spectacles from a registered optometrist or dispensing optician the price will include advising you on the most appropriate type of frame and

lenses for your needs, ensuring that the frame fits you properly, ensuring that the lenses are positioned correctly in the frame and also providing an aftercare service that will cover minor repairs and adjustments which may be needed throughout the life of your spectacles.

Registered optical practices also fund the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (www.opticalcomplaints.co.uk) which is an independent organisation that was set up to try to settle complaints from members of the public who are not satisfied with the goods and services received from a registered optical practice. It is free to use. Optical practices, like other businesses, work in a competitive environment, and do their best to ensure that their customers are happy.

Most community practices have a range of spectacles to suit every budget, so it needn't be expensive to get a pair which fits you well and through which you can see clearly and comfortably.

Should I get my spectacles from the same place where I had my eyes examined?

In most instances, your optometrist is required to give you a copy of your optical prescription immediately following your sight test. You can then shop around to purchase spectacles from wherever you choose. Many people do this without any problems, but you should be aware that if you do separate prescribing and supply, any problems you may have with your new spectacles can be more difficult to resolve. The College suggests, therefore, that it is best to have your spectacles dispensed where you have your eyes examined (College Guidance F3.12).

This leaflet is produced by the College of Optometrists. We are the professional, scientific and examining body for optometry in the UK. People who are our members agree to meet the highest clinical and ethical standards. Look for the letters MCOptom or FCOptom to see if your optometrist is a member.

Please visit www.lookafteryoureyes.org for more information.

This leaflet contains general information and it is always best to raise any specific concerns you may have with your optometrist. All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up to date scientific evidence. They are reviewed and updated regularly.