

# The AB Sees of Children's Eyewear

Walking into an optical store can be a little confusing – especially if you are a parent trying to find the right glasses for your child. There are so many frames to choose from. How are you supposed to figure out which ones your child is willing to wear and, more importantly, which will last longer than their next playground adventure?

There are many features to consider when choosing eyewear, particularly for a child, explains Doris Oeder, certified optician with Optics Unlimited at The Eye Clinic. “You want to get glasses that will provide the vision correction they need, and that will stand up to the rough and tumble lifestyle of an active child. And I speak from experience when I say letting your child have a say in the frame style you purchase will help prevent future battles over wearing the glasses.”

Oeder says most children who need eyeglasses are either nearsighted or farsighted. “The degree of visual correction needed will determine how the glasses will be worn. Some children will need to wear their glasses just for close work, while others may need to have them on every waking moment. How much they have to wear the glasses will more than likely be a factor in the type of eyewear they choose.” To help you understand your options when purchasing eyewear for children, here's a closer look at some key features:

## **Lens Thickness**

The prescription is always the primary consideration in choosing glasses. If the prescription calls for strong lenses that are likely to be thick, it is important to keep the frames as small as possible in order to eliminate unnecessary thickness, and therefore weight, in the lenses. The optician can give you a good idea of how thick the lenses will be and can recommend suitable frames.

## **Fashion Savvy**

Whether they wear them are full- or part-time, most kids will get at least a little teasing about their glasses, especially the first time they wear them. One way to help make your child more comfortable with wearing glasses is to let them try on a variety of styles in order to pick those that best flatter their features.

## **Plastic vs. Metal**

Children's frames are made of either plastic or metal. Many manufacturers copy adult styles for children's frames. In the past, plastic eyeglasses were a better choice for children because they were considered more durable, less likely to be bent or broken, lighter in weight and less expensive. But now manufacturers are making metal frames that incorporate these features as well.

## **Bridge Fit**

One of the toughest parts about choosing suitable frames for kids is that their noses are not fully developed, so they don't have a bridge to prevent plastic frames from sliding down. It is important that the glasses stay in place, because kids have a tendency to look right over the tops of the lenses instead of pushing slipping glasses back up where they belong. A qualified optician is usually the best judge of whether a frame fits properly.

## **Spring Hinges**

Temples with spring hinges allow the temples to flex outward, away from the frames, without causing any damage. Kids are not always careful when they put on and take off glasses, and the spring hinges can help prevent costly repairs.

### **Lens Material**

For safety reasons, children's lenses should be made of polycarbonate because it is the most impact-resistant material around. It is also thinner and lighter in weight than regular plastic lenses. Polycarbonate has built-in protection against potentially damaging ultraviolet (UV) rays, and the lenses are coated for scratch-resistance.

Oeder says there are so many children's eyewear options for kids to choose from today that parents and their children can easily find a pair of glasses that meet both of their requirements: the quality parents know is important, combined with the stylish design kids want.

For more information about children's eyewear, call or stop by Optics Unlimited in any location of The Eye Clinic.

## **Five Trends in Children's Eyewear**

1. Designers have taken cool and classic designs that work for adults and scaled them down for kids. Don't be surprised if your child wants eyeglasses that look a lot like yours.
2. Branded or licensed eyewear lines grab a child's attention. Fisher-Price, Hush Puppies, Stride Rite, Disney and Marvel Comics appeal to kids of all ages, but especially to very young children. Lines related to extreme sports (X-Games), basketball (Nike, Converse) and other sports are very popular with slightly older kids.
3. Spring hinges, strong and flexible frame materials and impact-resistant polycarbonate lenses all help protect your child's eyes — as well as your financial investment in their eyewear
4. Don't forget about sunglasses for kids. Protecting your child's eyes from the sun's harmful UV rays may lower their risk of adult eye problems like cataracts later in life. Photochromic made of impact-resistant polycarbonate are an excellent choice for kids who spend a lot of time outdoors. Clip-on sunglasses (or newer versions that magnetically attach to eyeglasses) also work well.
5. For the child who is fast becoming a teenager, eyewear fashion is increasingly important. Designer eyeglass frames from Guess?, Calvin Klein and others are very appealing to "tweens." Also popular are frames branded with apparel and accessories names such as Esprit, Nine West and Ocean Pacific, as well as celebrity brands like the Britney Spears and Hilary Duff eyewear collections.

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