New glasses? Choosing the perfect pair

Arianna Kokkinakis
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Introduction

If I had a dollar for every time I heard a client say they dreaded choosing glasses frames, I would be rich enough to quit my job as an optical consultant.

Most people don’t like wearing spectacles because they either don’t like choosing them or don’t feel confident wearing them. And with designer frames costing several hundred dollars, it’s very frustrating to feel you are settling for less than perfection.

Frame selection can be incredibly hard if you haven’t been trained to do so, and if you take a punt and pick a frame for yourself, more often than not it will be ill-fitting and uncomfortable.

There are so many decisions to negotiate: Neutral or bright? Retro or contemporary? Iconic or edgy?

This eBook looks at some of the most useful tips and most common mistakes people make when choosing a frame. Many of the pitfalls are very easy to avoid once you know what to look for. I hope, after reading this resource, that you’ll have greater confidence in selecting and wearing your glasses.

After all, the eyes are the first thing we look at every time we meet someone. Why not ensure they’re looking their very best?

Read on to discover how to choose the perfect pair of glasses.

Arianna Kokkinakis
The 3 biggest mistakes when choosing glasses...

1. Trying to get one pair for every occasion

A pair of glasses is a bit like a pair of shoes. There is no perfect pair that works in all scenarios. You probably have at least ten pairs of shoes for different purposes.

Why then do we think one pair of glasses will do the trick? After all, the first thing a person will look at when they meet you is your eyes, not your shoes! Ideally, you can build up your collection year by year, with comfortable everyday frames in versatile colours and perhaps a statement pair for occasional use.

The same goes for sunglasses, where you can have your go-to everyday pair with comfort and UV protection, but you might like a cool aviator or an oversized frame in a graduated tint for glamming up the weekend.

If you do just want one frame, make sure it caters for what you do 99 per cent of the time rather than what you do very occasionally. It never ceases to amaze me how many people buy a frame that will look nice for a wedding or other event when the other 364 days a year it doesn’t quite work.

Your main pair should be compatible in colour with your wardrobe but this doesn’t mean you need to go for a neutral! If your working wardrobe is full of staples in neutral greys, navies and whites, you can afford to go for a bright shade in a colour that compliments your skin.

Yours truly (on right) with Nicky Kokkinakis (left) and frame designer Caroline Abram (centre).
Light, Northern European skin tones can look terrific in berry shades of raspberry, plum and blackcurrant as well as tortoiseshells, and translucent shades. Darker skins can pull off stronger colours such as royal blue, blood-orange and lime.

2. Choosing on your own

If you’ve ever brought a pile of swimsuits into a change room and found none to be flattering then you will appreciate the value of a skilled sales assistant. Often, they can have one glance at your body and return with the most flattering cossie you ever tried. It’s similar with choosing a frame. An experienced frame specialist can instantly assess your face and return within moments with a range of styles guaranteed to flatter. They will also help you avoid some of the classic pitfalls such as:

- **Too big.** Small faces can still pull off the BIG look but they need to bear in mind the proportions of their face. Going deeper rather than wider can help achieve the look without swamping your face.
- **Too short.** Men in particular often choose a frame they like from the front with little regard for the fit of the frame behind their ear. A frame that sits perched on top of the ear will slip down the moment you lower your head to read.
- **Too high / too low.** A poorly fitting frame can sit too high on the bridge of your nose or too low on your cheeks causing problems that are more than simply cosmetic. Multifocal lenses have the best chance of success in a frame that sits properly on your face, with approximately one third of the lens above the horizontal midline of your eye and two thirds below.

3. Going for a trendy style

One of the most frequent questions I’m asked is ‘What’s trending right now?’ This question rings my alarm bells every time. In an era of social media and instant gratification, trends come and go in a matter of weeks, not months (never mind years). But your glasses should look good on your face for a couple of years.

Don’t ask about trends! Instead ask: what will suit me and flatter my face?

A good frame specialist will have a wide selection of contemporary frames to choose from. They will consider your skin tone, your hair colour, your eye colour and the size of your face. They will ask you about your style preferences, your wardrobe palette, your audience (who will see you in these glasses?) and many other things you may not have considered. In short, the frame should be tailored to your unique needs, rather than your conforming to a current fad.
Top 7 tips for looking fab in your specs

1. The Optical Dispenser is your best friend

The first way to look fab in specs is to choose an appropriate frame for your face. Ignore the myths you have heard in the past about choosing a certain shape for your face shape. Remember, your optical dispenser is your best friend for the frame selection process. They have been trained to tune in to your facial features and know what will work. They also will know whether your prescription will work in a particular style you want. Trust them! Don’t, however, get pushed into a style you are uncomfortable wearing. We want you to be confident when wearing your new specs.

2. Colour: use it wisely

Another thing to be aware of when selecting a frame is your skin tone and hair colour. Wearing certain colours against your skin can wash you out. If you have fair skin or yellow undertones, avoid nude/cream or clear frames. If you have olive skin steer away from dusty pink or blue frames. The best way to test this is just to try the frame on in good lighting; you will know straight away.

Your hair colour can also determine whether you are going to look fab or drab in your spectacles. If you’re grey or white, avoid darker frames that will take away the attention from everything else. My favorite hair colour is red and, if this is you, choose a green frame; you will look fab, I promise!
3. Multi-coating: Nothing comes between your eyes and the world

When ordering your new spectacles, the optical dispenser will often recommend multi-coating your lenses. This coating is important if you want to look fab in your specs. It is used to eliminate reflections from bright lights on the lens surface and this improves the cosmetic appearance of your glasses. Your spectacle lenses will be clear with no reflections, so ensure that your dispenser applies it when you are ordering your new specs. For the ultimate in invisible glasses, go for multicoated lenses in a rimless frame.

4. Cleanliness is next to God(dess)liness

There is nothing more unattractive than dirty spectacles. Your eyes command more attention than any other part of you, and someone looking at you will just see smudgy fingerprints and scuff-marks. Get into a habit of using a lens spray and micro-fibre cloth every morning to remove any debris and smudges. Be religious about keeping your glasses in their case when not in use, rather than floating around in your handbag. You can also use an ultrasonic cleaner or regular warm soapy water to give them a thorough clean every so often. Keep those lenses sparkling and you will look your best!

5. Makeup – more important than ever!

People generally think that spectacles take away the attention from your eyes. This is absolutely not the case. Spectacles bring focus to your eyes so your makeup must always look crisp. When wearing your specs, choose a concealer that’s two shades lighter than your skin to eradicate dark circles around your eyes. Don’t forget to define those brows so your frames don’t overpower your whole look.
6. Choose the right material

Frames come in a variety of finishes from enamel to gold-plated or crystal-encrusted. But they tend to be made from two different underlying materials - metal or acetate (plastic). Each lends itself to different possibilities - metal can look minimal and sharp; acetate can make possible an explosion of colour.

Some skin types or face shapes will suit a certain frame material more than others. E.g. if you have prominent cheeks, a larger acetate frame may seal off your eyes causing the lenses to fog with perspiration. If your skin is sensitive, it is important that a metal frame does not sit directly on your cheeks and is well supported by your nose.

Frames need to be comfortable and light enough to wear all day. Choose light titanium or rimless styles for a featherweight frame option. If your glasses are heavy, they can aggravate sinus problems and can also cause you to frown. Now, nobody looks good with a frown!

7. Keep your audience in mind

Frames can look so good they cause people to stop you in the street and ask where you got them. And everyone should have at least one pair of fabulous glasses - whether they are an outrageous hue or embellished with precious metals and stones. But this may not be the same pair you wear to the board meeting where you want to look your professional best. Glasses lovers build up a collection over time of frames for various situations, so they always have the right pair.
The perfect pair of sunglasses

Unless you’ve been living under a rock for your entire life, you should already know that the sun’s ultraviolet light is harmful to your eyes and the tender skin surrounding them. This is true not only on sunny summer days, but also on overcast days and in winter, when the low angle of the sun means your eyes are more exposed.

Protection from UV-light is critical as these rays can contribute to cataracts, macular degeneration, pterygium and other eye diseases. While many people have a transition coating on their prescription spectacles, this won’t provide sufficient protection for the eyes and they can’t be relied on as a proper pair of sunglasses.

Looking good and feeling comfortable in your sunglasses are imperative. Here are some important things to consider when choosing your next pair.

What are your needs?

Fashion often dictates which style of sunglasses we wear but you may want to think about when you wear your sunglasses:

- If it’s mainly on weekends, when you’re in relaxed mode, you may prefer to wear what’s trending.
- Week days, for getting to and from work in a smart suit or dress, a classic look in a neutral tone can look most professional.
- If you’re an outdoorsy type, comfort and lightness are important considerations, as is durability.
- If you’re a man who wants to keep his sunglasses handy, you may need to choose a less curved style, that slip into your jacket pocket without being too bulky.

Coverage is also very important; the purpose of sunglasses is to protect your eyes from UV light. If the light can get in over the top and around the sides, it defeats the purpose. Larger or closely-fitting styles, with curved, wraparound lenses provide the best possible coverage.
Where will you be wearing your sunglasses?

Well outdoors obviously! But try to think more specific. Will you wear them when driving, playing golf, fishing off a boat? This will determine the style, shape and lens type of your ideal pair.

Your prescription

If you wear glasses for distance vision, you will usually need prescription sunglasses. Prescription lenses are available for a wide range of sunglass designs, but sometimes are not possible in very curved or wraparound styles. The Eye Practice stocks a range of sunglasses that are available in prescription lenses, including sporty and wrap styles such as Maui Jim. Maui Jim sunglasses are even available in highly-affordable ready-to-wear bifocal designs, to allow reading vision without having to take them off. Maui Jim is also available in multifocal to order.

Lens type

If you’re going to be using your sunglasses on the water or at the snow, definitely think about polarized lenses. Light reflected from the surface of water or snow becomes partially polarized. Polarized light can cause strong symptoms of glare but the good news is that the glare can be eliminated by wearing polarized lenses. These lenses are available in a wide range of sunglasses and ski goggles.

What colour lens?

In everyday sunglasses, this often comes down to personal choice and what suits your colouring. But when it comes to skiing, some tints are designed for special purposes, e.g. a warm yellow lens in your ski goggles will not only filter out blue light, but also improve contrast and enhance definition, allowing you to spot those moguls and icy spots. They are great for overcast conditions but you may need something darker (mirror coated black lens) if you plan to ski in bright, sunny climes.

Transitions/driving

Transition lenses darken in response to increased levels of light and are very popular with people who just want one pair of glasses. But they don’t always work that well in the car. If you’re suffering from glare when you drive, think about keeping a pair of sunglasses in the car for driving in bright conditions, and never wear tinted lenses at night, even if you suffer from glare.
Classic errors to avoid when choosing a frame

Left: This frame shape is too wide and too low.

Right: This frame is a better width and shape, but sits too low on the face, with the eyes too close to the top of the frame.

Left: The temple (or side arm) of the frame is too short.

Right: This temple is too long. Adjusting the bend will result in too much temple length behind the ear.

Both of these frames are well-proportioned on the face. The eyes are clearly visible and well centred.

Theses frames clear the cheeks, even when smiling. The contours compliment the brow shape. The colours suit the skin tone.
About the Author

Arianna Kokkinakis has been passionate about fashion eyewear since forever. She is one of the second generation of the Kokkinakis family to be involved in The Eye Practice on a day-to-day basis. Her friendly professionalism, sense of fun and smart fashion sense continues to impress our discerning clientele.

Arianna says, glasses need to look good but they also need to work. It makes a big difference to have someone technically trained to understand the limitations of your prescription lenses on your choice of frame.

- Bachelor of Science in Environmental Biology at UTS (2013)
- Certificate IV Optical Dispensing at Randwick TAFE (2016)
- Arianna is currently undertaking further studies in audiometry
- She has also worked in fashion for such labels as Sass and Bide, Escada and Aje

We hope you find these tips useful in choosing a flattering spectacle frame. I’m always here to consult and advise and I am available for one-on-one frame consultations by appointment, or you can just pop in for a look at what’s new.

Call today on 02 9290 1899 for an appointment with our frame stylists