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## At the Optical Shop

Perhaps you realized, while walking with a friend or eating a pensive breakfast, that you might not be seeing clearly. Perhaps a teacher or boss noticed that you appeared to have cracked lenses. You might even have been referred by an anger management class, which wondered whether you were seeing threats or insults that simply weren't there.

In any event, you find yourself at the optical shop, overwhelmed by the types of eyeglasses on display. New technologies have added greatly to the options since you last went when you couldn't read the signs on the highway. Here's a guide to some of the choices you might make, based on interviews with vision professionals, inventors and some sight-afflicted acquaintances.

**Rose lenses.** Conceptually, this item goes back to the nineteenth century, when a critique of seeing the world as if all was rosier than reality cropped up in the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain and Friedrich Nietzsche. In the hippie era, though, entertainers and innovators like John Lennon, Janis Joplin, Steve Jobs and Hunter Thompson did actually wear pink-tinted glasses, which signified how anti-establishment they were and aligned with hopeful delusions like "All You Need Is Love" or "Stay hungry. Stay foolish." Today, optometrists sometimes recommend pinkish lenses for depressed, overly critical or morbidly pessimistic clients.

**White lenses.** These cut down on distracting glare, making them an appealing option for people with ADHD or sensory disturbances, as well as garden-variety scatterbrains. However, my sources say white tints also have an unfortunate tendency to foreground anything green, coloring the world with splotches of envy. Wren Williamson, a graphic designer in Charlotte, NC, chose white lenses so she could concentrate better in her company's open-concept office. But while her glasses highlight the pens, scratch

pads and computer screens at her work station, they also get her wondering which coworkers make more than her lousy salary and enjoy more generous fitness and beauty perks, she says.

**Prisms.** Since the days of lens grinder/philosopher Baruch Spinoza and spectacles pioneer Ben Franklin, opticians have used the physics of light and of glass to direct wearers' lines of sight productively. Ingenious lens makers now offer many models that help remedy specific deficiencies of attention. For example, do you frequently forget to pick up your keys and umbrella on the way out the door? Do you often stand in front of the open refrigerator, unable to spot the mustard or the pickles? Walking to the subway, do you bump into things and people because you're thinking about your sins? Consider the PMX Wayout, the Blank No More and the AntiClum variants available from Prismatico, Inc.

**Darkquells.** Similar to night vision goggles, but without the spooky ghost outlines, this dark-sensitive coating on normal-looking eyeglasses boosts clarity twice, four times or eight times in low-light conditions. This function automatically activates, making it useful for night driving, amateur spying and sneaking around for extramarital sex. Be careful, though: Overuse of Darkquells has been linked to deterioration of daytime vision. Additionally, some jurisdictions may soon be banning this optical option for civilian use.

**Telescopic.** How far ahead glasses allow you to see is another factor to consider as you roam the optical shop. Imagine Captain Ahab standing on the deck of the *Pequod*, a telescope held against his face, scanning the ocean in every direction for a glimpse of his nemesis, the Great White Whale. Then imagine Ahab wearing 4D glasses that help him spot not only Moby-Dick's whereabouts but also when he'll show up in nearby waters. Still in the experimental stage, 4D telescopic glasses purportedly adjust to near future, medium future and far future. You could use these to glide into parking spots just when they open up or to see when your mother-in-law is going to drop in for a visit.

**Reversers.** Similar to the button on your cell-phone camera that switches from normal view to mirror mode, the touchpoint on reverser glasses

toggles the wearer from sharply looking out to peering clearly within. Some wags call this "psychoselfie mode." Naturally it's not safe to hit that button while you're driving, but it could come in handy at a job interview when you're asked tricky questions like "What is your most annoying work habit?" or "How do you handle being bullied?" Gary Hendrick of Stoplight Corners, MO, credits reverser mode with a quick recovery when he blanked out on a date with an inquisitive young woman he dearly wanted to impress.

Some of the options combine, but expect to spend upwards of 2000 dollars for, let's say, white lenses with telescopic. Unfortunately, none of these models come with a locator function, and as of yet, they're not insurable. So if you habitually mislay your glasses, might get dunked at the lake or are prone to being punched during bar fights, maybe you'd be best off with traditional specs.