

Ready-made reading glasses

If you are over 40 and need reading glasses you can buy ready-made reading glasses (readymades) without a prescription from many different shops. For most people they are not as good as custom-made reading glasses, but they may be suitable as a spare pair.

Even if you wear readymades, it is important that you have regular eye examinations (at least every two years) to make sure that your eyes are healthy.

Why do people need reading glasses?

As you get older the lens inside your eye gets stiffer. This means that it is more difficult for you to focus on things that are close to you and you have to hold things further away to see them clearly. This is called presbyopia. People normally notice this when they are over 40. When that happens you need reading glasses to bring things back into focus.



Who is suitable for wearing readymades?

Readymades are designed to correct presbyopia only, so they may be suitable if you need glasses only for reading. You should not wear them for driving or watching television. Readymades are 'one size fits all', so the frame may not fit you and you may not be looking through the centre of the lenses, which can cause headaches or eye strain. They are also made so that the lenses in both eyes are the same, so they are not ideal if your sight in one eye is different from the other. Readymades do not correct astigmatism (where the eye is shaped a bit like a rugby ball rather than a football) which distorts both your distance and near vision. If you have astigmatism and wear readymades your vision will still be distorted, even though it may be clearer.

Do you recommend that people wear readymades?

For some people, readymades can be useful as spare glasses for doing things like shopping or reading menus and maps. As they are cheap to buy, it is possible to have several pairs and so it doesn't matter too much if you lose them.

The stronger the power of readymades, the closer the focus will be. If you need reading glasses, we recommend that you have at least one custom-made pair, which you use for most reading, and just use readymades as spare pairs. Your custom-made pair will be made to your exact prescription, so the lenses will sit correctly in front of your eyes (so you look through the centre of them) and the frame will fit you well, which will make your vision more comfortable.

Will readymades do me any harm?

Readymades are unlikely to do you any harm - although a recent study found that they may not be made accurately.¹

Where can I go to get more information?

Your optometrist will be able to give you more information about which types of glasses are most suitable for you, and how often you should have an eye examination. It is important that you have regular eye examinations, particularly when you are over the age of 40, as some eye diseases, such as glaucoma, can affect your sight so slowly that you do not notice before some of your sight has been lost. Risk factors for developing glaucoma include being of African or Caribbean descent, being aged over 40 or having a family history of the condition.

¹ Elliott DB, Green A. Many ready-made reading spectacles fail the required standards. *Optometry and Vision Science* 2012.



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