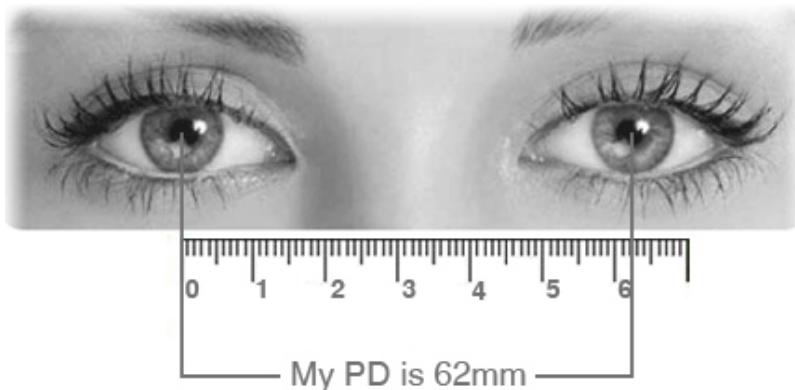


## Give Me My Pupillary Distance



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### THE CAMPAIGN FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR GLASSES WEARERS

*One simple change to the eye-test prescription would make it easier for you to get the best possible glasses for the best possible price. Please read on to find out why, and what you can do to help make it happen.*

#### The GOC is acting against the interests of UK glasses wearers.

The government appointed regulatory body (General Optical Council) entrusted to look after consumer welfare for eye health is in fact acting against the broader interests of UK glasses wearers (60% of the population) in favour of protecting the narrow interests of the optician profession whom it regulates.

In the mid-1980s the government attempted to increase the amount of competition and choice available to spectacle wearers by instructing the General Optical Council (GOC) to relax the regulations governing who was allowed to advertise

and sell prescription glasses. The government's intention was to ensure that everyone who wears glasses should have access to the widest possible choice of frames and lenses at the most competitive prices.

The actual effect of the deregulation process so far has been to create a marketplace dominated by the High Street multiples with no measurable reduction in the real cost of glasses to UK consumers.

[<sup>1</sup>Click to read DTI Benefits from Competition; Case Studies – July 2004](#)

One reason that glasses are still so expensive is that consumers are not provided with complete prescription information following a sight examination which would give them full freedom of choice to shop for their glasses wherever they choose.

The missing piece of information is called the Pupillary Distance or PD. It takes an optometrist just seconds to take this measurement during a sight examination but, under current GOC regulations, your PD measurement does not have to be recorded and provided to you on your prescription form.

#### **Your Pupillary Distance - and Why it Matters.**

The PD is the distance between the centres of your pupils. This information is required to ensure that the centre of focus of your prescription lenses is correctly aligned with your pupils when making your glasses to give you maximum comfort and effectiveness.

Your prescription is in-effect a set of instructions to make your glasses. There is no legitimate medical, health or safety related reason for omitting the PD from your prescription form: this is an unethical and blatantly anti-competitive practice.

The General Optical Council determines what information opticians are required to write on your prescription form

following an eye examination. The Council's failure to include the PD measurement makes it difficult for you to buy your glasses from anyone but the optometrist who conducted your eye-test, or from another High Street optician where the measurement can be done at the point of sale.

***By this omission the General Optical Council is effectively sustaining a "High Street monopoly" on the supply and sale of prescription glasses.***

**Adding Insult to Injury.**

For most of us eye examinations do not come free of charge. Opticians are PAID to do your eye test and provide your prescription, either directly by you, by the NHS or, if you live in Scotland, by the Scottish government!

It is simply inconceivable to most people that we would allow ourselves to be coerced into buying our medicines from the doctor who carries out our health examination?

So why are the government and the GOC colluding in this coercion of consumers into purchasing their glasses from the same person who examines their eyes?

**The General Optical Council says "Buying Glasses Online is Safe".**

In fact, what the deputy chief registrar of the GOC actually said at the annual conference of the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) in Oct 09 was:

*"The Department of Health has been presented with no evidence from the industry to show that de-regulation of spectacle sales has resulted in any harm to the public which might lead to a review of the current regulatory framework".*

Indeed, he went further, and warned ABDO members that any attempt to re-open the issue could actually result in further de-regulation. In other words, it could be argued that the market could be freer still, and customers would still be perfectly safe. You can read the report of his speech <sup>2</sup> <http://www.opticianonline.net/Articles/2009/Re-regulation-unlikely>

## in age of internet

If the GOC is saying that buying glasses online is safe then why are they not ACTIVELY regulating to make it easier by including the Pupillary Distance on prescriptions?

***We believe this constitutes clear and irrefutable evidence that the GOC is not acting in the interest of consumers and we demand that the Westminster and Scottish governments act accordingly.***

### **More Customers are Complaining about Opticians than Ever Before.**

In September 2009 the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) reported that complaints to this consumer watchdog had risen by 35% on the previous year.

These included complaints about the failure of .."*practices to comply with requests for prescriptions and refusal to measure the interpupillary distance*"! read the full report <sup>3</sup> [http://www.opticianonline.net/Articles/2009/Optical complaints up by more than a third](http://www.opticianonline.net/Articles/2009/Optical%20complaints%20up%20by%20more%20than%20a%20third)

### **Increasing Number of Consumers are Buying Glasses Online with full Confidence.**

The impact of the growing trend towards online shopping in general is increasingly being felt in the optical sector. Not only are the anti-competitive practices of the mainstream optical industry failing to stem this growth they are actively bringing the profession into disrepute as evidenced by the increasing number of complaints to consumer bodies.

Online retailers of prescription glasses are providing consumers with help and guidance on how to measure their PD by themselves when it is refused by the optometrist who carried out their eye test.

Measuring your own PD is not difficult!

Unfortunately the effect of an opticians refusal to provide a PD when requested is to create a lasting bad impression of

eye-care professionals in the eyes of the general public, for no good reason.

In the interests of everyone who wears glasses (which is most of us at some point in our lives) we urge you to sign our petition today.

 [Download this page as a .pdf file](#)

1  [DTI Benefits from Competition; Case Studies – July 2004.pdf](#)

2  [Re-regulation unlikely in age of internet.pdf](#)

3  [Optical complaints up by more than a third.pdf](#)

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