

Optometrists and Opticians Board
Practice Guidelines for Online Sales of Spectacles

1. Objective

1.1 These practice guidelines are developed by the Optometrists and Opticians Board to provide guidance to practitioners relating to online sales of spectacles, including issuing prescription, preparation and dispensing of the spectacles. This is to ensure that proper assessment and management are in place to safeguard interest of the public against dubious source of sales.

1.2 It is the duty of practitioners to exercise due care and professional discretion before prescribing or dispensing spectacles purchased online. Prescription and dispensing contrary to these guidelines may be regarded as an act of professional misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action by the Board.

2. Issuing of prescription for spectacles to be purchased online

2.1 The prescriber for any spectacles to be purchased online shall be a registered optometrist, who shall only prescribe according to the following conditions:

- a. The prescription for online sale of spectacles shall be restricted to the following:
 - i. Consumers aged 16 years old and above without any organic eye disease or systemic medical condition that will affect vision; and
 - ii. Spectacles for single vision use, with power up to $\pm 6.00D/-2.00DC$ (i.e. no prism, curve lenses, progressive lenses, bifocal lenses or free-form single vision lens).
- b. The prescription for online purchase of spectacles shall contain the following information in order to be considered a *valid prescription*:
 - i. Details of consumer including full name, date-of-birth and unique identification number (e.g. NRIC number);
 - ii. Date of eye examinations done;
 - iii. Issue date and expiration date¹ of the prescription;
 - iv. Name, work and/or contact address and contact number of the prescriber;
 - v. Refractive error of the consumer (indicate spherical and cylindrical readings);
 - vi. Inter-pupillary distance reading;
 - vii. Back Vertex Distance (if applicable);
 - viii. Material/design of spectacle frame (if applicable);
 - ix. Written assessment that the consumer does not have any existing organic eye disease or systemic medical condition that will affect vision; and
 - x. Statement of advice acknowledged by the consumer to undergo eye checks if the spectacle causes discomfort.
- c. The prescriber shall document the consumer's intended use of the prescription and the source (online or otherwise) from which the spectacles would be purchased.
- d. The prescriber shall exercise his or her own professional discretion on whether to issue a prescription, taking into consideration, amongst other things, the safety of the source from which the consumer intends to purchase the spectacles.
- e. The prescriber shall exercise his or her own professional discretion in determining the prescribing fee.
- f. The prescriber shall remind the consumer on the validity period of the prescription issued.
- g. The prescriber shall provide any necessary information to the online retailer if verification or clarifications are needed.
- h. The prescriber shall keep a duplicate copy of every prescription issued for at least 3 years. This is in addition to any consumer's record maintained by the prescriber.
- i. The prescriber must be aware that he or she is liable for all prescriptions issued by him or her and must have indemnity insurance.

¹ *'Expiration date'* refers to the date beyond which the prescription is no longer valid, and it shall be a period not longer than 2 years. The prescribing optometrist shall inform the consumer that the prescription does not give any form of assurance with regard to the ocular status of the eye at any point of time.

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2.2 Where the standard of prescribing of spectacles is not otherwise stated in these specific guidelines, the prescriber shall comply with the general professional practice guidelines for optometrists.

3. Dispensing of spectacles purchased online

3.1 In the context of online selling of spectacles, no optician or optometrist shall dispense any spectacles without a valid prescription².

3.2 Every optometrist or optician who dispenses spectacles purchased online (hereby referred to as the “dispenser”) shall comply with the following conditions:

- a. The dispenser shall ensure that a valid prescription is received from the consumer before he or she continues to process the online purchase order.
- b. The dispenser shall not make any change to an existing prescription.
- c. The dispenser must contact and clarify with the prescriber if there is any missing or unclear information in the prescription.
- d. The dispenser must check the details on the prescription to ensure that the consumer's age falls within the permitted age range and that there is no pathological ocular disease documented by the prescribing optometrist.
- e. If the prescription does not meet the requirements of a valid prescription, the dispenser shall reject the prescription and not dispense the spectacles. The dispenser may contact the consumer to arrange an on-site examination by an optometrist for a new valid prescription.
- f. The dispenser shall ensure that the spectacles are prepared strictly according to the specifications indicated in the prescription.
- g. After the spectacles are prepared, the dispenser shall verify the finished product against the prescription before dispensing.
- h. The dispenser shall include an advisory notice to every consumer upon dispensing the spectacles. The advisory shall include contact information of a shop and a registered optometrist or optician for after-sale service in the shop (e.g. adjustment of spectacles).
- i. The dispenser shall ensure that the spectacles are packed in a protective case to prevent it from damage during transportation.
- j. The dispenser shall keep proper records on the spectacles dispensed, consumer information and prescriptions for audit purposes.

Disclaimer

This guideline is not meant to replace, but is to be used in conjunction with the 2010 Code of Professional Conduct and Professional Practice Guidelines for Optometrists and Opticians issued by the Optometrists and Opticians Board. Each practitioner is ultimately responsible for the management of his/her consumer, in light of the clinical condition and information presented by the consumer, and the diagnostic and treatment options available. This guideline will be updated by the Optometrists and Opticians Board as and when necessary.

² ‘Valid prescription’ refers to prescription that contains specific information stipulated by Board specifically for online sale of spectacles (see: 2.1(b) - “Issuing of prescription for spectacles to be purchased online”)