

# Ophthalmic Dispensing Optician

Ophthalmic dispensing opticians adapt and fit corrective eyewear, including eyeglasses and contact lenses, as prescribed by an ophthalmologist or optometrist. They help customers select appropriate frames, then prepare work orders for ophthalmic laboratory technicians, who grind and insert lenses into frames. The dispensing optician then adjusts the finished eyewear to fit customer needs.



## Career Description

The ophthalmic dispensing optician combines an understanding of the human eye and vision with customer service skills to order the production of corrective eyewear, aid the patient/customer in selecting appropriate, aesthetically pleasing frames, and adjust the frames to fit the customer's face.

Chief duties of the dispensing optician:

- Analyze and interpret prescriptions
- Communicate effectively with patient/customer
- Determine facial and eye measurements
- Identify the human eye structure, function, and pathology
- Assist the customer in selecting appropriate frames and lenses by assessing individual patient needs
- Use an ophthalmologist's or optometrist's prescription to prepare work orders for the ophthalmic laboratory technician
- Deliver prescription eyewear/vision aids and instruct customers in use and care
- Maintain patient/customer records and address complaints
- Provide follow-up services, including eyewear adjustment, repair, and replacement
- Explain theory of refraction
- Identify procedures associated with dispensing artificial eyes and low vision aids, when appropriate
- Adapt, dispense, and fit contact lenses
- Assist in various business duties, including frame and lens inventory, supply and equipment maintenance, and patient insurance/claim forms submission and record keeping
- Apply rules for equipment safety



## Employment Characteristics

Dispensing opticians work 40-hour weeks in retail stores, some of which may offer one-stop eye examinations, frames, and on-the-spot lens grinding and fitting, or are self-employed in other optical field areas, such as sales/marketing. Other dispensing opticians provide their eye care services in conjunction with ODs and MDs at eye care centers.



## Employment Outlook

As the baby boomers reach middle age and the percentage of middle-aged and elderly people increases, so will these individuals' need for corrective eyewear.

Eyewear as fashion—more and more people today now own two or more pairs of eyeglasses for different occasions—also translates

into strong future demand for ophthalmic dispensing opticians, as do the many new vision products, available in plastic and glass, tinted lenses, multifocal extended-wear, and disposable contact lenses.



## Educational Programs

**Length.** Ophthalmic dispensing optician degree programs require 2 years of study.

**Prerequisites.** A high school diploma or its equivalent is generally required for entrance into a program. Ophthalmic dispensing optician students should be familiar with the principles of physics, biology, algebra, and geometry.

**Curriculum.** Ophthalmic dispensing opticianry educational programs include instruction in geometrical optics; ophthalmic optics; anatomy of the eye; and the use of optical instruments, machinery, and tools.



## Inquiries

### Careers

American Board of Opticianry  
6506 Loisdale Road, #209  
Springfield, VA 22150  
703 719-5800  
[www.abo-ncle.org](http://www.abo-ncle.org)

National Academy of Opticianry  
8401 Corporate Drive, Suite 605  
Landover, MD 20785  
301 577-4828  
[www.nao.org](http://www.nao.org)

National Federation of Opticianry Schools  
1238 Robinson Point Road  
Mountain Home, AR 72653  
870 492-6623  
[www.nfos.org](http://www.nfos.org)

Opticians Association of America  
441 Carlisle Drive  
Herndon VA 20170  
703 437 8780  
[www.oaa.org](http://www.oaa.org)

### Program Accreditation

Commission on Opticianry Accreditation (COA)  
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Chapel Hill, NC 27515  
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E-mail: [Ellen@COAccreditation.com](mailto:Ellen@COAccreditation.com)  
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