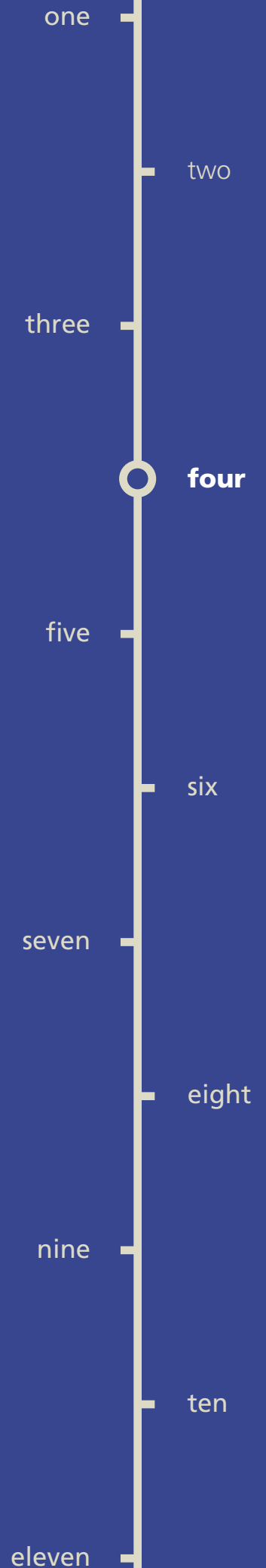




The Customer Journey

Touchpoint **four**: Browsing and waiting



Touchpoint four: Browsing and waiting

When a patient is waiting for an eye examination they may be nervous or unsure about what will happen to them during the examination. It is primarily the responsibility of Optical Assistants/Receptionists to ensure that those waiting are kept occupied and any questions they may have are answered to allay any fears. A more proactive approach is preferable to the passive 'take a seat'.

The waiting area

Ideally, most can be encouraged to browse the frame displays whilst waiting for their appointment. However, for those who are elderly, infirm or do not need spectacles yet, it may be appropriate for them to be offered a seat in the waiting area. Some practices have a drinking water Dispenser for the use of patients. This is a straightforward way to offer refreshment without the need to offer tea or coffee to every patient, which is worth considering, but maybe time consuming and difficult to do at busy times.

The waiting area should be well stocked with suitable reading materials. However, it is best to avoid newspapers and magazines that are not related to optical products, services and information. Suitable materials include information sheets about the practice and the services and products you provide. These can be supplemented with frame catalogues, contact lens information and information booklets regarding eye conditions. This will encourage patients to read and become better informed about the practice as well as the products and services it provides.

Customer Journey materials

- 'Making the most of your visit' leaflet (ZCJMOSTLEAF1)
- 'Choosing and using soft contact lenses' booklet (ZCJUSINGBOOK)
- 'Choosing and using soft contact lenses' video (ZCJUSINGVID)
- 'Touch them and be amazed' back card (ZCJBACKCARD)

Waiting

The patient waiting for an eye examination should be kept informed if the Optometrist is delayed or running behind schedule. The practice manager should instigate some system to enable the Optometrist to keep reception staff informed of any delay in the consulting room. This can be passed on to the patient waiting.

Support staff who are not busy with other patients should use the opportunity to build a rapport with someone waiting for the eye examination. They may discover that this person really does want a new pair of spectacles, or would like to know more about contact lenses. This type of information is invaluable and should be written down and passed on to the Optometrist with the record card.

Browsing

When someone is browsing for new spectacles before the eye examination, not all the facts regarding their up-to-date prescription are likely to be available. However, there is still plenty of opportunity to consider new spectacle frame options. Some will have an idea of the type of frame they would like to consider. For those who do not, you will need to ask questions. Open questions will help to develop more information that is relevant to this person as an individual regarding what they want their new spectacles to look like. In selling terms, these requirements are called 'customer objectives,' e.g.:

What to say

'What do you like about your existing glasses?'

'What changes or improvements could you suggest for your existing spectacles?'

'Which of these styles do you prefer?'

'What sort of frame are you looking for?'

This may be the first time they have considered their spectacles in this way. However, when this information has been obtained it will enable practice staff to have a better understanding of what is important to this individual, regarding their eyewear, how they want to look and what activities they want to do whilst wearing them.

When information has been gathered suitable options should be selected using the following guidelines.

Face geometry and frame shape

To achieve a cosmetically pleasing appearance when wearing spectacles, it is important to assess the balance of the wearer's facial features. Then you can guide them to select a frame to complement these features. It

is often said that when choosing spectacle frames, opposites attract. In other words, if the customer has rounded facial features a more angular frame style should be suggested. However, do exercise great caution when assessing a customer's facial geometry. Obviously it would be unwise to tell someone that they have a round face or a long nose. It is more tactful to suggest they try a certain frame design on, to make the comparison with one they may quite like, but you feel this other frame would suit them more. Or, because the frame you are suggesting complements their facial features.

Use the following checklist as your guide to assess the appearance of a new frame on a customer's face:

1. Eyebrows

The upper rims of the frame should be in line with or parallel to the eyebrows. Eyebrows should not be visible through the lenses.

2. Distance between the eyes

If the eyes are one eye width apart, they are said to be well balanced. However, if the eyes are closer together it is better to select a frame with a narrow bridge and/or more ornate lugs and decorative temples.

If the distance between the eyes is greater than one eye width, suggest frames with heavier rims and a more ornate bridge.

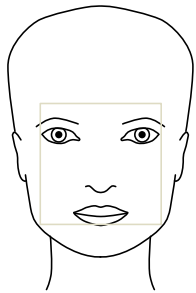
3. Length and size of nose

Low bridges will make long noses look shorter. Short noses will appear longer with a high mounted bridge. Extremely small noses may require a frame with a keyhole bridge. These are particularly suitable for some people of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origin.

Although keyhole shaped bridges are not as widely available as they were.

When deciding the most appropriate rim shape to complement an individual's face, decide what their face shape is, first of all.

The main face-shape categories are; oblong, square, round, oval and triangular. Obviously, tact will be required when assessing a customer's face shape. It is not recommended that you tell someone what you feel their face-shape is, for obvious reasons.

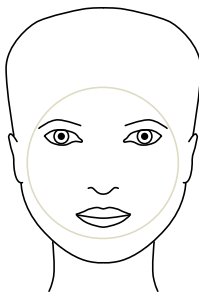


Square

The square face

This is where the distance between the temples is equal to the distance between the chin and hairline. There will be distinct temple and jaw definition.

The best frame shapes are wide, with oval or rounded lower rims. If the frame is wider than the widest part of the face, it will create the illusion that the face is longer.

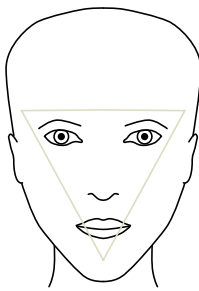


Round

The round face

As with the square face the distance between the temples will be equal to the distance between the chin and hairline. However, the face will appear rounded and short.

Try to select shallow, wide frames, with an angular feel. Avoid rounded frames, which will make the face look even more rounded.

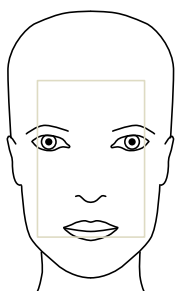


Triangular

The triangular face

This face is characterised by the distance between the temples being smaller than the distance from the chin to the hairline. It is also dominated by a wide forehead and narrow chin.

Recommended rim shapes will be flatter, ovals, with exaggerated, horizontal lower frame rims. The aim is to accentuate and stretch the narrow chin. A rounded aviator style would be ideal.



Rectangular

The rectangular/oblong face

This describes a face when the distance between the temples is smaller than the distance from the chin to the hairline. Overall, the face will appear long, with a prominent chin and the eyes may be close together.

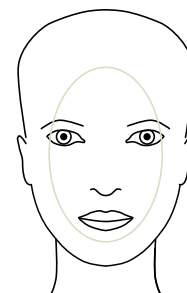
Try to encourage this type to select frames that are wide, flat and oval to break the length of the face. This will help to accentuate greater facial width.

The oval face

This is considered an ideal face, as it is suitable for almost any frame style. It is characterised by the distance between the temples being smaller than the distance between the chin and hairline.

Almost all frame shapes will look good on this face.

Trying to memorise all this information can seem quite daunting, at first. However, with practise it will soon become second nature.



Oval

Summary

Initially, you may feel more comfortable assessing whether a face has round or angular features. Then select a frame that is the opposite, i.e. an oval or rounded frame style is more suited to an angular face. Also, look at the customer's face to decide where the narrowest and widest points are. For example, the narrowest place may be the temples. If this is so, select a frame that is wider at this point. As we become older our facial features tend to sag, leading to a characteristic jowly appearance. Selecting a frame that is wider at the top or has high set, wide lugs, can offset this. The effect will be uplifting, to give a much more youthful appearance and is cheaper than a face-lift!

Use the checklist below to confirm that the frame selected is appropriate for the wearer and their prescription.

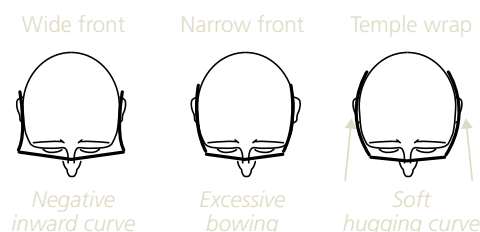
Check list for a well-fitting frame

As a summary and to make sure that you have helped the customer choose an appropriate frame for their needs, follow this checklist before placing the order.

1. **The pupils** should appear to be roughly in the centre of the frame. This will ensure a more even lens edge thickness, when glazed.

2. Width

The frame sides must not press on the customer's temples. Neither should there be large gaps between the sides and the customer's head. However, adjustments can often be made to the lugs and sides to overcome this.



3. Bridge size

If the bridge is too small, the frame will sit high on the face and the eyebrows will be visible through the lenses. When glazed the weight of the lenses will put pressure on the nose pads. In time, this is likely to lead to discomfort and indentations in the wearer's nose.

If the bridge is too large, the frame will slip down the nose, causing the frame to sit on the wearer's cheeks. Each time they smile, the spectacles will move up! This may be uncomfortable and lead to erratic visual quality, especially if the frame has bifocal or varifocal lenses.

4. Side (temple) length

If the distance from the front of the frame to the bend (length to bend) is too long, the spectacles may slip forward. If it is too short, they may fall off. Check where the bend of the side is in relation to the customer's ear.

The majority of frames allow a wide range of adjustment to the length to bend. Adjustments will be explained in more detail, later in this module.

5. Cosmetic appearance

Do tell the customer whether a frame suits them, or not. Because when they leave with their new spectacles they will be a walking advertisement for your practice.

When you and the patient are happy with the choice of frame keep it with their record card to be passed on to the Optometrist.

Customer Journey materials

'Contact lens proactive dispensing mat' (ZCJDISPMAT)

Capturing browsers and establishing rapport

The majority of patients who want to buy spectacles will probably have an eye examination in your practice first of all. However, more people are realising that they do have a choice as to where they buy their new spectacles. This means that you are likely to see more 'browsers' than you used to. Of course this is a great opportunity to gain new patients. The other good thing is that browsers visiting an Optician's are likely to be different to browsers in a clothes shop. Generally when someone visits an optical practice to look at new spectacles they have already made a decision. That is to buy a new pair of spectacles. Perhaps they have a copy of their latest prescription with them. However, browsers in clothes shops may be 'just looking' with no intention of making a purchase.

If it is accepted that browsers are truly interested in the products the practice has to offer, you can be confident to approach and engage them in conversation with the objective of 'winning them' as a new patient.

Today's consumers do shop around more. They are more discerning, style conscious, better informed and are subjected to large amounts of advertising for optical products and services. This has subsequently increased the number of browsers in optical practices, which in turn has expanded the possible opportunities optical practices have to convert them from potential customers into clients.

Always be sensitive to the way browsers are approached. Remember the last time you were shopping and approached by a member of staff asking "Can I help you?" Your reply was probably, "No thanks, I'm just looking".

If the browser is greeted with "Hello, how are you today?" an open question, conversation will generally ensue, building the rapport necessary for a potential customer to become receptive to further suggestions and information. This technique is easier to achieve if you are not behind the reception desk, since this 'barrier' will interfere with building a rapport efficiently and effectively. Whereas, if you are on the shop floor of the practice, perhaps arranging or cleaning frames you are more accessible and able to adopt a less threatening approach.

In this way the customer's objectives can be established by probing further with additional 'open' questions. Initially, if you are not comfortable with open questioning, you can be proactive by offering advice concerning new product ranges or current promotions, pointing out where the different frame ranges are and explaining pricing structures. After a rapport has been established, customers can be encouraged to try frames on or advised how their current spectacles could be improved – lighter, thinner or smaller etc. If the information you gain indicates that this person could benefit from contact lenses this would be a good time to mention them.

By implementing these techniques, it will be easier to obtain even more information about the customer's objectives. Then, more open and closed questions can be introduced as appropriate product options are discussed and agreed.

Action Plan

As a practice team decide and agree ways to improve how patients are handled when waiting for an eye examination.

1.
2.
3.
4.