

Foreseeing your eye exam: 10 pointers on what to expect and fun tips

About 75% of people in the United States have some form of vision correction,¹ yet ask them what stereopsis is and they may think it's the sound system at an IMAX movie.

Stereopsis is actually depth perception, and it is among the many eye functions tested during a complete eye exam. For those who have never been to the eye doctor, it can sound like scary stuff. But it's really about as scary as a kids' movie – if you know a little about what to expect at the eye doctor's office.

Following are the top 10 things to **expect at your eye exam**, along with fun tips to make the visit more enjoyable for you and your doctor.

1

GIVE IT AN HOUR:

Most comprehensive eye exams take about an hour, so plan accordingly. Your one-hour lunch break may be too tight a timeframe. **Fun tip:** if the optometrist sells frames on location, get there early so you can try on several pairs before the exam.

2

BE READY TO TALK:

The doctor will want to understand your overall health. Be ready to talk about any vision and eye issues, injuries and/or surgeries, medications and your overall medical health, including family history. **Fun tip:** Knowledge is power. Start a conversation with the doctor about how you can improve your eye health. What kinds of foods or activities are vision friendly?

3

E-F-P-T-O-Z:

The visual acuity test, also known as the eye chart, measures your vision sharpness.² The doctor will ask you to read as much as you can from the chart while looking through lenses of varying strength to measure both your **near and far-off vision**. **Fun tip:** Finish by saying "I-C-U-2."

4

PRESCRIPTION TESTS:

A retinoscopy is a simple test to help the doctor estimate your prescription. You will focus on a target (often a letter) and the doctor will shine a light at your eye while flipping lenses in a machine. A refraction test, which includes an instrument with lots of lenses for you to look through, will further isolate your **prescription needs**.³ **Fun tip:** Visit the website of your favorite eyeglass chain to browse eyeglass styles, colors and lens options. Some, including [Glasses.com](https://www.glasses.com), accept prescriptions online.

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5

YOU'LL LOOK DEEP:

Remember those visual games that require you to stare at a pattern until the shape of an image emerges? That is what a stereopsis test is like. You'll be asked to identify a raised letter or shape on a screen so the doctor can measure your depth perception and if your eyes are working together.⁴

Fun tip: Mazes, word searches and hidden-picture games all help your eyes focus, which is good for depth perception.

6

THERE WILL BE FLASHING:

A visual field test measures your peripheral or "side" vision. Most tests involve a center light for you to focus on, and various tiny lights that flash along the side, which will trigger you to press a button.⁵ This test detects if you have blind spots. **Fun tip:** Focus on your outstretched hand and ask a friend to hold up a number of fingers to your side. How many fingers do you see?

7

A LITTLE PRESSURE:

Your doctor will test for glaucoma, a common vision disease that can cause a slow loss sight. The exam includes a puff of air and a check of your inner eye pressure and optic nerve.⁶ If [glaucoma is treated early](#), it can be slowed or stopped. **Fun tip:** Look for animal forms and other shapes in the clouds. You went to the eye doctor, so enjoy everything you see.⁷

8

FRONT-EYE REVIEW:

To examine the front of the eye for infection or disease, the doctor will perform a slit lamp test. Don't worry – it won't hurt. The doctor may give you eye drops first and then use a low-powered microscope, along with a bright light (the slit lamp), to check your lens, cornea and other eye parts.⁸ The test may make you light sensitive. **Fun tip:** Bring outrageous sunglasses and make a statement.

9

BACK-EYE REVIEW:

The retinal exam is a pain-free procedure that allows the doctor to see the backs of your eyes. To do this, your [pupils will be enlarged](#), maybe with special drops, so the doctor can view your retina, blood vessels and optic nerve end.⁹ The drops will cause light sensitivity and blurriness, so bring shades. Don't worry if you forget yours – the doctor's office will provide temporary shades. **Fun tip:** Tune into some of your favorite music, relax and close your eyes for a little bit afterward. What colors do you see?

10

GOOD PUPILS:

An alternative to dilating eye drops is retinal imaging, which digitally scans your eyes in less than a second. The scan is printed as an eye map that your doctor can examine closely.¹⁰ More optometrists, [including those at LensCrafters](#), are offering retinal imaging. Retinal imaging does not affect your vision! **Fun tip:** You don't have to worry about light sensitivity with retinal imaging, so make outdoor plans for after the exam.

¹"Vision Impact Institute Releases Study on Corrective Lens Wearers in the U.S.," Essilor, www.essilorusa.com/content/essilor-usa/en/newsroom/news/vision_impact_instit.html

²"What to Expect During a Comprehensive Eye Exam," AllAboutVision.com, www.allaboutvision.com/eye-exam/expect.htm

³Ibid.

⁴"Stereoscopic Vision and Depth Perception Testing," Ophthalmology Web, www.ophthalmologyweb.com/Pediatric-Ophthalmology/5649-Stereoscopic-Vision-and-Depth-Perception-Testing/

⁵"Visual Field Testing," AllAboutVision.com, www.allaboutvision.com/eye-exam/visual-field.htm

⁶"Glaucoma, Macular Degeneration & Diabetic Eye Diseases," LensCrafters, www.lenscrafters.com/lc-us/vision-guide/common-eye-diseases

⁷Ibid.

⁸"What is a Slit Lamp Exam?" Healthline, www.healthline.com/health/slit-lamp-exam#Overview1

⁹"Eye Exam – What you can expect," Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/eye-exam/details/what-you-can-expect/rec-20189669

¹⁰"What to Expect at Your Eye Doctor's Exam," LensCrafters, www.lenscrafters.com/lc-us/eyecare/optometrist