Opticians Should Not Sell Glasses

I have met many opticians. The best ones don’t sell glasses – they deliver satisfaction. The customers feel their vision is optimized based on their individual requirements. The techniques used are subtle and not noticeable to the untrained eye. The best opticians have developed a large set of “tools” they can employ to tweak a pair of eyeglasses making them just a bit better.

Lens treatments offer an almost limitless opportunity to customize and improve eyewear. Every pair of eyeglasses you sell should be customized for each patient. This improves customer satisfaction and sets you apart from the competition.

Developing your “tool kit” of techniques is a matter of education, experimentation and practice. Education teaches you how to perform a technique. You must experiment with each technique to see, firsthand, how it looks and what it does for eyewear performance and aesthetics. Practice is required to perfect the technique and learn how and when to apply it.

Education

Your basic silver, gold and blue mirrors are metallic mirrors. They are based on a very thin layer of metal that is vacuum evaporated on the lenses. Metallic mirrors have two parts – the base tint and the metal mirror.

The base tint is what gives the mirror its darkness. Any color can be used, but gray and brown are most common. When looking through a gray lens, viewed objects maintain their proper color balance. Everything is just darker. Looking through brown lenses mutes blue objects and makes both green and red objects more vivid. Brown tints may also improve contrast by blocking the blue light (shorter wavelengths). This is why drivers and snow skiers prefer brown base tints. Most other colors will skew the viewers color balance to varying degrees.

Basic metallic mirrors come in silver, gold and blue. They can be dark (a regular solid mirror) or light using a flash mirror. Without a base tint, the mirror alone is hard to see. Adding a dark background makes the mirror more pronounced and bold. If you need a dark sunglass without a bold mirror, use a flash mirror.

Adding a dark color or mirror to an eyeglass lens increases the backside reflections. This is both annoying and uncomfortable. Backside reflections are even stronger on large frames because more lens area extends further from the face and catches the light. Backside anti-reflection (AR) coatings are the only way to minimize the problem.
Experimentation

This is the fun part. By varying the base tint and combining it with different mirrors, you create limitless possibilities. I recommend a twelve-lens experiment. Use all plano lenses for best results. Tint three lenses dark brown and tint three lenses dark gray. Leave the remaining six lenses un-tinted. Send the lenses to your coating company for mirror coatings. Coat four silver mirrors, four gold mirrors and four blue mirrors. Use the following table as a guide. Apply a backside AR coating only to the gray tinted lenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mirror</th>
<th>Dark brown tint</th>
<th>Dark gray tint</th>
<th>No tint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>1 lens</td>
<td>1 lens (w/AR)</td>
<td>2 lenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>1 lens</td>
<td>1 lens (w/AR)</td>
<td>2 lenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>1 lens</td>
<td>1 lens (w/AR)</td>
<td>2 lenses</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Look at the difference in mirrors that have brown and gray base tints. See how it changes the look of the mirror giving it a warmer or cooler tone. You can match the tint color with one that complements the patient’s skin tone. The effect is subtle but the glasses look better with the proper base color.

Now look through the lenses with different base tints. It is best to look outside on a sunny day. Look at something blue (the sky), something green (the grass) and something red (a sports car). See how the color of objects is enhanced or diminished depending on the base tint. Most of change is due to tint color but notice how mirror color also provides subtle variations.

Choose the combination that enhances the colors of objects that appeal the patient. If your patient is proud of their shiny red sports car, suggest a gold mirror. The gold will make the red standout. If they are nuts about their lawn go with a combination that makes the grass look even greener.

Stand with your back to the sun or other bright light. Hold a gray tinted lens with AR in front of your eye. Now try a brown base without AR. The mirror with AR on the backside is much more relaxing. Obviously better for patients who spend a lot of time in sunlight.

If you are adventurous, cutout some shapes using adhesive tape. A star, circle and rectangle are good shapes to start with. Apply the tape to the center back side of three non-tinted lenses. Now tint the lenses. Make sure you press the tape down firmly so dye does not come in around the edges. The lenses will take a little longer to tint because the mirror prevents dye from entering the front side.

Peel off the tape. Notice the soft, almost subliminal shape seen in the mirror. This is a great effect for someone who wants to show off without being ostentatious. Of course, if you want to be bolder, cover portions of the mirrored surface to create shapes that stand out. (See your coating lab for masking mirrors.)

Traditionally, gradients and double gradients have been used to control the light and dark areas in sunglasses. By using the “tape and tint” method, you have infinite control. Can you think of an application where a circular gradient would be better than the straight slit found on double gradient lenses?
Practice
Let's review the new tools we learned.

- Coordinating mirror base colors to patient’s skin tone for a better-looking pair of glasses.
- Choosing a mirror base color better suited to patients’ activities.
- Selecting base tint/mirror colors that enhance objects of particular interest to patients.
- Adding backside AR to sunglasses making them more comfortable to wear.
- Dispensing a mirror with no or very little base tint for a more ethereal and suggestive look.
- Customizing placement of light and dark areas in sunglasses with “tape & tint” to suit a particular activity.
- Using “tape & tint” to place geometric designs to lenses making them more festive and playful.

You need to practice what you know. It takes time to learn what tint colors complement what skin tones. You need to practice developing a dialog with the patient to learn what they do and what interests them. It takes time to identify if a patient wants to stand out or blend in with the crowd.

With practice, and knowledge of your patient you will quickly identify “tools” and techniques you can use to customize every pair of eyewear. Each patient will leave your office with glasses that are better performing and/or better looking.

Everyone wants to be treated special. Let the customer know what you’re doing to improve their vision and eyewear. Not only will they feel pampered but they will also view you as an integral part of their vision care. Remember; don’t sell glasses – deliver satisfaction!

Written by Edwin J. Ellefsen president of Opticote, Inc. A full service-coating laboratory located in Chicago offering anti-reflection, mirror and glass coatings.