

The Sunny Side of Glasses—Polarized Lenses

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Summer sunshine is here...and is it bright! For summer sun polarized lenses are the ticket. Polarized lenses selectively filter out glare from water or car bumpers. Boaters, bike riders, beach lovers, and commuters benefit equally from this type of lens. Because they are not pitch-black, polarized sunglasses do not require removal when indoors or on our gloomy-but-glary Northwest days.

Polarized lenses first became available in 1936 when Edward H. Land patented his Polaroid filter. During manufacture, PVA polymer chains are stretched so they form an array of aligned, linear molecules in the lens. Hollywood quickly embraced the look of sunglasses, making them popular with the younger generation.

Polarized lenses reduce glare by selectively filtering out reflected light. Sunlight comes from all angles. Light rays reflected off the surface of water, glass, or the bumper of a car, however, travels only horizontally. Polarized lenses stop these horizontal rays at the lens surface, letting only non-reflected light through to enter the eyes. By selectively filtering these rays, glare is eliminated. The remaining vision is crisp and comfortable, the face is relaxed, and attention is focused on the fun, not the sun!

Lenses are made in single vision, lined bifocal, and no-line bifocals, great for reading on the beach. Lenses are available in brown or grey. Brown lenses give surroundings a sunny, sienna tint, are good for reading golf greens, examining landscaping for health, and coordinate well with brown frames. Grey lenses are more color-true which is important for many sports and occupations.

Commuters love polarized lenses—even our darkest Northwest winter days have glare which polarized lenses relieve. Boaters and anglers know about polarized lenses which let them see deep into water. If LCD displays are a problem, just tilt the head and the polarization disappears. There are a few instances where a polarized lens is not light-years ahead of dark lens sunglasses--pilots should not wear polarized lenses when flying as LCD screen visibility is reduced. Polarized lenses always reduce ambient light so should never be worn for night driving.

Polarized lenses are also available in photochromic, that is, they change from slightly dark to much darker when in bright sunshine. For terrific vision, add an antireflective coat to eliminate the reflection of one's eye in the back surface of the lens. Insurance can be used for prescription pairs of polarized lenses.

Polarized sunglasses give the comfortable driving and outdoor activity vision we all want...and they are available in your prescription.