

## How Will I Ever Get My Child to Wear Glasses?



If your child has a visual impairment, chances are they'll have a prescription for glasses. You may be wondering, "How on earth am I ever going to convince my child to keep glasses on their face?" The teachers from A Shared Vision get this question all the time. They support families who have very young children, from birth to age three, who are blind or visually impaired. They provide parents with strategies on raising a child with a visual impairment. Here are some of their tips on how to get a child with a visual impairment to wear glasses. We also found some tips on the For Little Eyes website ([www.forlitleeyes.com](http://www.forlitleeyes.com)), a community forum for parents who have children that wear glasses, patches, or contacts.

The good news is that some children might take to wearing their glasses right away. In a poll of 200 parents from the Little Four Eyes Facebook group, 47% of the parents said their child took to wearing glasses right away. Eighteen percent said it took less than a week. And the remaining said anywhere from one week to more than a month. So, you're not alone. The time it takes for your child to adjust to wearing their glasses depends on many factors. Although it might be frustrating, stay patient. The result - helping your child use their vision better - is worth it.

### Finding the Best Fit

- First, check the prescription and find out when your child is supposed to wear the glasses. Are they for seeing near or far distances? If it's time to change the prescription, consider gradually boosting it up so the change in what the child sees is not so drastic.

- When you're shopping for glasses, if possible, have the child choose their glasses. They might be attracted to a certain color or style of glasses. Goggle-shaped glasses or ones with a nosepiece might fit your child's face better than traditional glasses.
- Consider accessorizing the glasses with anti-slip ear grips found in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors, or straps made from silicone or neoprene.
- Clean the glasses regularly. Lenses with smudged fingerprints make it harder for your child to see.



### It's All in the Right Attitude

Every child is different, so not all these tips will work for everyone, but in listening to the stories from our parents, there are some common themes:

- **Stay consistent.** Don't give up. Expect that your child WILL wear the glasses. It is sort of like feeding, where your child must taste carrots 25 times before you can guarantee they don't like carrots.
- **Stay neutral/positive.** Children pick up on their parents' cues. If you're really upset about their glasses, that's not going to help them want to wear their glasses. Instead, even if you're frustrated that it's the 101st time you put the glasses on your child's face, have a smile on your face while you're doing it.
- **Use words like "on" and "off"** to describe the position of the glasses when you put them on or off your child's face. If your child takes his/her glasses off, put them back on and say, "Glasses on."
- **Compliment your child.** When your child puts on their glasses, you could say, "Your glasses are on! I love how you look in your glasses!" "Looking sharp!" "What a cutie you are in those pink glasses!"
- **Take a breather.** If your child is having a temper tantrum, wait until the child calms down before trying to put the glasses back on.
- **Find ways to distract your child.** You know your child the best. Use that to your advantage and as soon as the glasses go on their face, find that special something - a favorite toy, a snack or song - to distract your child. They'll soon forget the feeling of glasses on their face.
- **Resist correcting the position of your child's glasses.** Sometimes when an adult "fixes" the position, the child will remember the glasses are there and removes them.

- **Kids are programmed to test their parents.** Adjust your expectations and don't assume your child is "not liking glasses" but maybe socially testing you in a typical developmental way.
- **It's a team effort.** Make sure your other providers (physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech/language pathologist) are working with your EI-TVI and providing similar or complimentary strategies.
- **Talk to your EI-TVI** about what worked and what didn't. What should you do differently? Are there other suggestions you could try? Talk about your feelings - it's OK to feel frustration, anger or disappointment - and definitely celebrate milestones!

### Tips & Tricks to Try at Home

- Make wearing glasses part of your child's routine. For example, when you start your day, you might help your child brush their teeth, get dressed and put on their glasses. Before you leave your house, you might help your child put on their shoes, grab a coat, and put on their glasses. Do the same routine every day. Even if the glasses stay on for a short period of time, that time can eventually be extended as your child becomes more comfortable with the routine.
- Sometimes, it's easier to do a difficult task if everyone is doing it together. The whole family can practice wearing glasses, even if they're just glasses with clear lenses or fashion glasses. Mom, Dad, or a big sister are great role models for younger siblings.
- If it is the feeling of the glasses on their faces or heads that is bothering your child, try back- and- forth play with lots of opportunities for practice to work on desensitization. For example, you could start with a stack of hats to try on and take off. Make a game out of putting a hat on mom or dad and taking it off and then putting a hat on baby and taking it off. Pile a couple hats on top of mom, dad or your child and take them off. Then try the game with glasses. Put mom's glasses on and then take them off. Put your child's glasses on and take them off. Put glasses on favorite dolls, people, and stuffed animals. Be sure to narrate out loud what you're doing so your child will understand the concepts of "off" and "on."
- Slide the glasses on your child during their favorite activities. Then, quickly, do the activity which should look clearer to the child. Or practice wearing glasses during a special activity so your child connects glasses with something fun.



- From one of A Shared Vision’s teachers: “I had a child that refused to wear their glasses, so I took a picture of us without our glasses on and we had ‘frowny faces.’ I took another picture of us with our glasses on and we were smiling. The parent would show the ‘frowny face’ picture to the child when she wasn’t wearing her glasses.”
- Read books about wearing or getting glasses. Glasses: A Board Book features photos of babies and toddlers in glasses and a simple rhyming text that celebrates the role of glasses in a young child's life. Arthur is a favorite children’s character who wears glasses. Here are some other book suggestions (<https://forlitleeyes.com/books-for-kids/#glasses>). You could even make your own book of people you know in your family or your neighborhood who wear glasses.
- Throw a “new glasses” party. Maybe you just eat cake and ice cream. If the occasion feels special, your child might feel more excited about wearing something new.
- Put your child’s glasses on while they are sleeping. For some kids, they won’t notice when they wake up and will wear their glasses better after that.
- Treat your child’s glasses with care, both at home and on the road. If your child does not need glasses for protection and tends to play with their glasses in the car, consider taking them off during car trips.
- Allow for breaks in between periods of wearing glasses. If your child had a terrible day of not wearing glasses at all, know that it usually gets better. Just take a break and start again first thing the next morning.
- Have a special activity for when your child puts the glasses on. It may help to sit behind your child and provide hand-under-hand support, so you can also redirect little hands that may try to take glasses off.
- Allow your child to tactually explore glasses. You may want to buy a cheap pair of readers so you aren’t worried about your child’s prescription glasses getting dirty or broken.
- Reward your child for wearing their glasses - maybe the reward is a special snack, a new toy or a few more minutes of play time.

