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Tips for Successfully Dispensing Reading Glasses

Here are some ideas that our partners have found helpful in dispensing reading glasses. Adding glasses to your mission or program is really quite simple if you follow these suggestions.



1. PLANNING

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- **Promoting the reading glass distribution:**

- It is highly recommended that you utilize the **“Free Reading Glasses Day”** approach. By posting a notice a week or two in advance of your arrival, you can attract a large crowd.
- You can service up to 200-300 people in a day. This by far the most productive use of your time as opposed to servicing individuals who you see needing glasses one at a time.
- Ensure that the event notice clearly states it’s for near vision correction, not distance vision correction.
 - You may attract a lot of children, who generally don’t need reading glasses. But that may be inevitable—and some may be helped with readers.
 - Because a “free reading glasses day” attracts so many people, it’s a great outreach tool to reach people for other parts of your mission or program.

- **Timing of the event:**

- Consider the best time for the most impact. In many of the communities you may serve, often the men are working during the day and will not be able to attend the clinic. Try to stay into the early evenings if possible or the weekend if that is the case.
- Certainly, if you are offering sunglasses, you should find a way to get them to people working outside.

PLANNING

- **Number of volunteers:**

- Ideally, a local volunteer or volunteers should help manage the flow of people waiting to get glasses. These volunteers can also answer any questions and screen people to ensure that they need reading glasses (see Triage section below).
- Depending on the number of people at the clinic, utilize one person to test the power and another to dispense the glasses. You may need several of these teams to service the crowd if it's over 50 people. At least minimal foreign language skills at the power testing table are required.
- If you have sunglasses, another person at a sunglass table would be helpful. Very little training is required for this.

- **Triage:**

- Have someone walk the line pre-testing the people so that those who can't be helped with reading glasses don't spend their time waiting in line.
- The screeners should have something with print to use to test people's near vision (e.g., magazine, Bible, etc.). The printed material should be held at a normal reading distance.
- If the person can read or see the print clearly without glasses, congratulate them on their great eyesight and send them on their way.
- If the person moves the printed material away to see it clearly, this indicates that they need reading glasses. Direct them to the line to get reading glasses.



2. DISPENSING AREA SET-UP

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See our [Dispensing Tips video](#) for advice on setting up the dispensing table.

You will need two tables: One testing table (“picnic” size or smaller) with one pair of glasses of each power for checking what power people need. And, a dispensing table (“picnic” size) for holding the glasses to be dispensed.

- **Testing table:**

- On the power testing table have **one pair of each** power of reading glasses along with printed materials (e.g., a reading card, eye charts or newspapers) available to use to test people’s near vision. Also, a needle and thread may be helpful for some people.

- **Dispensing table:**

- Make sure all bags of readers are clearly labeled by power and ideally have tags removed—except power stickers on the lenses.
- Arrange the readers (still in their bags) by power in a row (lower powers to your left), behind or under the dispensing table.
- On the dispensing table, arrange a few styles of each power in a column. Arrange the columns on the table from left to right—mirroring your stock as described in the previous point.
- Label the powers on the table using a large piece of tape—this will help you be organized during the sometimes hectic dispensing day.



3. DISPENSING THE GLASSES

DISPENSING THE GLASSES

Dispensing steps:

- **Power testing:**

1. Have the person stand (or sit) across from the dispenser at the power testing table.
2. Tell them that you are first going to find the right power, then they can pick the right frame style.
3. Ask their age.
 - If they are under the age 50, start with a +2.00.
 - If they are over the age 50, start with a +2.50.
4. Put the glasses on the person and see if they are comfortable with reading or viewing the printed material at normal distance (usually about 16 inches).
 - If the person states that the printed material is clearer as they move it closer to their face—the glasses are TOO STRONG.
 - If they state that the material is clearer further away from them—the glasses are TOO WEAK.
 - Either increase or reduce the power of the test pair until the person is satisfied with the power.
5. Write the number of power selected on a piece of paper so that the person can get his/her glasses at the dispensing table. Another way to do this is for you to take the person to the dispensing table and have another volunteer start power testing the next person in line.

DISPENSING THE GLASSES

- **Selecting the glasses:**

1. Once the person is at the dispensing table, ask her/him to pick the style they like from the appropriate power column of readers.
 - Please note that there is not much of a difference between 0.25 diopter. For example, a pair of +2.50 power readers is subjectively pretty close to a pair of +2.75 power readers. In this case, slightly stronger is better as they will “grow” into this power eventually.
 - Some people can take a long time selecting the right pair or style and the waiting line grows fast! Be sure to help facilitate their decision as best you can.
8. Record the power on a tally sheet.

- **Additional notes:**

- Try to collect information as to how many people you served and the powers they needed. RestoringVision would love to get that data back and it will help you plan for the next time.
- If you can, get pictures and stories from the recipients. Phone videos and interviews are great as well. The theme of these should be how the reading glasses will impact their lives.

Dispensing reading glasses can go quite quickly using this method. You can easily impact the lives of 50-75 people in an hour! For more information visit: www.RestoringVision.org/dispensing-tips.