

Optical Dispenser interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Optical Dispenser roles usually test three things: whether you can explain the technical fitting process clearly, how you handle real customer situations (including complaints), and whether you know the equipment and software the practice uses. Expect a mix of practical walkthroughs and past-experience questions rather than pure theory.

- **Process:** Questions asking you to walk through how you'd carry out a fitting or measurement task step by step.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about how you've handled customers, sales, or product recommendations before.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations, often a dissatisfied customer or a technical problem, to see how you'd respond under pressure.
- **Technical knowledge:** Direct questions about equipment, lens types, coatings, or software you'd be expected to use on the job.

Most interviews open with general background and why you want to work in optical dispensing, move into two or three process or scenario questions to check practical competence, then finish with questions about availability, target-driven sales comfort, and any questions you have for the practice.

1. Walk me through how you'd measure a customer's pupillary distance and fit them for progressive lenses.

Why they ask

This checks whether you understand the core technical task of the role and can explain it in a way a customer would understand too.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a clear step-by-step walkthrough: preparation, measurement method, tools used, how you'd check the result, and what you'd tell the customer at each stage.

Example answer

"I'd start by seating the customer comfortably and confirming their current prescription. Using a pupillary distance ruler or the measurement function on our digital equipment, I'd measure the distance between pupil centres, checking it twice for accuracy. For progressives I'd also mark fitting heights with the frame on the customer's face, since the lens design depends on where their eyes sit relative to the frame. I'd explain to the customer that these measurements affect how sharp their vision will be through different zones of the lens, so getting it right the first time avoids a return visit."

2. Tell me about a time you helped a customer choose between lens options when their budget was tight.

Why they ask

Dispensing involves genuine selling and negotiation, and the interviewer wants to see you can balance sales targets with honest advice.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the customer's constraint, the action you took to find a suitable option, and the result.

Example answer

"A customer came in needing new lenses but had a fixed budget that didn't stretch to the premium coating she initially wanted. I explained the practical difference between the standard and premium

anti-reflective coatings for her daily use, mostly screen work and driving at night, and suggested she prioritise the coating over a frame upgrade since it would affect her day-to-day comfort more. She went with a mid-range frame and the coating she actually needed, and came back six months later for sunglasses because she trusted the advice."

3. A customer comes back saying their new glasses are giving them headaches. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests judgement under pressure and whether you know the likely causes of a fitting problem versus a prescription issue.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a decision-making walkthrough: what you'd check first, how you'd rule out causes, and when you'd escalate to the optometrist.

Example answer

"I'd first check the physical fit: are the frames sitting level, is the pupillary distance measurement still correct against the lens optical centres, and has the frame slipped or been adjusted since dispensing. If the fit checks out, I'd ask about when the headaches occur and for how long they've had the glasses, since some adjustment period is normal with new prescriptions or progressives. If the symptoms persist beyond a reasonable settling period or the fit isn't the issue, I'd refer the customer back to the optometrist to check the prescription itself rather than guessing."

4. How do you stay accurate when you're processing multiple orders and patient records during a busy period?

Why they ask

Dispensers handle prescription details and records where errors have real consequences, so the interviewer wants evidence of a reliable system.

How to structure your answer

Describe your personal process or habits, then give a concrete example of it working.

Example answer

"I double-check prescription details against the original before entering them into the patient management system, and I read measurements back to the customer before finalising an order. During busy periods I finish one order fully, including the record entry, before starting the next rather than juggling several at once. That habit caught a transposed lens power once, before the order went to the lab."

5. How would you handle a customer who's frustrated about a long wait for their contact lens fitting?

Why they ask

This is a client-facing scenario checking de-escalation skills and how you manage expectations without overpromising.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a customer-service response sequence: acknowledge, explain, offer a concrete next step.

Example answer

"I'd acknowledge the wait and apologise for the inconvenience rather than getting defensive. I'd explain why the fitting takes the time it does, since a rushed contact lens fit can cause discomfort later, and offer a specific option, like booking the next available slot or having them browse frames while they wait. Most customers are fine with a delay once they understand it's for their comfort and not just poor scheduling."

6. What experience do you have with equipment like phoropters and focimeters, and with lens edging software?

Why they ask

The interviewer needs to know how much hands-on training you'll need before you can work independently with the practice's equipment.

How to structure your answer

Give a direct, honest account of your experience level with each tool, including where you've used it and any gaps you'd need training on.

Example answer

"I've used a focimeter regularly to check lens power and centration before dispensing, and I'm comfortable with standard frame adjustment tools for heat and alignment work. My phoropter experience is more limited since that's usually run by the optometrist, but I understand its role in the prescription process. I've worked with one brand of lens edging software before, so I'd expect a short adjustment period if this practice uses a different system."