

PHYSICS CAREERS

Optometrist

The job of an optometrist is to correct imperfect vision using optical devices such as eyeglasses or contact lenses. Optometrists also treat diseases of the eye such as glaucoma. To learn more about optometry as a career, read the interview with Dewey Handy, O.D.

How did you decide to become an optometrist?

For a while, I didn't know what career I was going to choose. In high school, I had a great love for geometry and an interest in science and anatomy. In college, I was looking for a challenge, so I ended up majoring in physics—almost by accident.

In college, I decided to apply my abilities in science to directly help people. I wasn't excited about dentistry or general medicine, but I was looking for something in a health career that would allow me to use physics.

What education is required to become an optometrist?

I have a bachelor of science in physics, and I attended optometry school for four years.

What sort of work does an optometrist do?

After taking a complete eye and medical history, the doctor may use prisms and/or lenses to determine the proper prescription for the patient. Then, a series of neurological, health, and binocular vision tests are done. After the history and data have been collected, a diagnosis and treatment plan are developed. This treatment may include glasses, contact lenses, low-vision aids, vision training, or medication for treatment of eye disease.



Dr. Dewey Handy uses optical devices to test the vision of a patient.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I like the problem-solving nature of the work, putting the data together to come up with solutions. We read the problem, compile data, develop a formula, and solve the problem—just as in physics, but with people instead of abstract problems. I also like helping people.

What advice do you have for students who are interested in optometry?

You definitely need to have a good background in basic science: chemistry, biology, and physics. Even if you don't major in science, you need to have a good grasp of it by the time you get to optometry school.

Being well rounded will help you get into optometry school—and get out, too.

You have to be comfortable doing the science, but you also have to be comfortable dealing with people.

