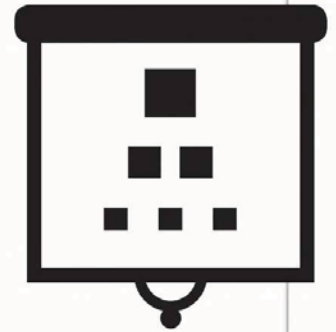


OPTOMETRIST



JOB DESCRIPTION

An optometrist is a specialized doctor who examines a patient's eyes to test their sight and check for injury, disease, or other conditions, such as diabetes and high blood pressure. They use specialty eye-testing equipment to diagnose eyesight problems, prescribe glasses or contact lenses to correct defects in vision, and prescribe medications to treat and manage eye diseases.



SALARY

Newly qualified optometrist ★★☆☆☆
 Consultant optometrist ★★★★★

INDUSTRY PROFILE

Strong competition for jobs • Growing sector with good career prospects • Job opportunities in optician practices, retail stores, hospitals, and doctor's clinics

AT A GLANCE



YOUR INTERESTS Eye care • Health care • Biology • Physics • Chemistry • Mathematics • Science • English • Information Technology (IT)



ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS A degree in optometry and professional license are required before practicing as an optometrist.



LIFESTYLE Optometrists work regular office hours, but evening and weekend work may be required. Part-time consultancy work is also available.



LOCATION Optometrists spend most of their time working in a private consulting or treatment room in an optician's practice, a clinic, or a hospital.



THE REALITIES Most of the work is spent conducting eye examinations inside a small room with no natural light, in close proximity to patients.

CAREER PATHS

After qualifying, most optometrists find work in independent practices or with larger companies that provide eye care to the public. Some work in hospitals, supporting other doctors and surgeons to deal with more complex eye problems; others work for manufacturers of spectacles and contact lenses, developing new products.

OPTICIAN If you have worked as an optician or optometric technician, your experience will help you when applying to medical school.



GRADUATE You need a bachelor's degree and doctorate of optometry degree, and to pass a series of exams, before becoming an optometrist.



▼ RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **DENTIST** *see pp. 282–283*
- ▶ **OPHTHALMOLOGIST** Diagnoses, treats, and prevents eye diseases. Ophthalmologists are medical doctors who carry out eye surgery in hospital eye departments, as well as in outpatient units and private laser-eye-surgery clinics.
- ▶ **OPTICIAN** Fits and supplies glasses and contact lenses according to prescriptions written by optometrists. Dispensing opticians also order and manage a range of optical products, and help customers to choose frames for glasses.
- ▶ **VISION THERAPIST** Investigates, diagnoses, and treats any abnormalities in eye movement and eye function.

SKILLS GUIDE



Excellent communication skills for explaining treatments to patients and answering their queries.



Flexibility to adapt to advances in optometric practice, such as improved scientific techniques.



Strong interpersonal skills to liaise with and put patients at ease, and interact with colleagues.



The ability to analyze scientific and mathematical data, and to diagnose patients accurately.



Good manual dexterity for using sophisticated optometric equipment correctly.



Concentration, precision, and attention to detail for examining patients' eyesight accurately.

PRIVATE PRACTICE

OWNER Oversees the running of an optometry practice, managing the business, recruiting staff, and ordering stock, often in addition to seeing patients.



OPTOMETRIST You will need to undertake continued training in order to have your professional license renewed each year. You can specialize in a particular area (such as children or partially sighted patients), work in a shop or hospital, or open your own clinic.



CONSULTANT (HOSPITAL)

OPTOMETRIST Assesses, treats, and monitors patients suffering from sight loss or complex or serious eye conditions. The role also involves helping patients in their rehabilitation following surgery or disease.



OPTICAL DESIGN CONSULTANT

Works with technologists in the optical manufacturing industry, helping to shape the design of glasses, contact lenses, and optical products for other purposes, such as telescopes or scanning systems.