

# You Say Your New Bifocals Don't Work As Well As Your Old Bifocals?

You went to the doctor, received a new prescription, and had some new glasses made. You see well looking in the distance, but when you try to work at your desk, in order to see your computer or typewriter, you have to bend forward and get within 16 to 20 inches of what you want to see. With your old bifocals, you could see out almost at arm's length.

## What is going on?

Unless a patient requests otherwise, most doctors will write a bifocal prescription that enables you to focus best up close at between 16 to 20 inches from your eyes. If your eyes have changed since your last examination, the doctor will ask for more power in your bifocals, and that is where your trouble begins. Stronger bifocals focus best up closer to your eyes. Weaker bifocals, as in your old glasses, focus best further away from your eyes than your new glasses do. If what you are trying to look at through your bifocals is more than 16 to 20 inches from your eyes, your new glasses may not focus well at all.

## The solution is one of these two approaches:

1. Return to your doctor and let him rewrite your prescription. He can then *weaken* your bifocal, allowing you to focus further away from your eyes. *However*, what the doctor gives you in one place he must *take away* from somewhere else. Allowing you to focus out further means you may not be able to see 20/20 at 16 to 20 inches, or what is considered normal reading distance. You must sacrifice some near visual acuity.
2. Usually a more practical solution is to switch from bifocals to *trifocals*. Trifocals have an intermediate section that is in effect, a weak bifocal, so it permits you to focus at approximately arm's length from your eyes; and there is also a section that allows you to focus up close at 16 to 20 inches. A higher percentage of people enjoy wearing trifocals than bifocals. Only a few days are needed for a first-time trifocal wearer to get used to using trifocals. The same prescription written by the doctor for bifocals can be used to make trifocals. People who need to see both at arm's length and up close are good trifocal candidates.