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Sesame Family Newsletter



August 7, 2009

## Glasses

by Elana A. Halberstadt

**Learning to wear glasses,  
family style.**

**Featuring:**

- Max Needs Glasses
- All in the Family
- Feelings About Being Seen
- Making it Fun
- New Green Glasses
- This Week on the Street



## This Week on the Street...

*Fun videos about wearing glasses.*

- [Eyeglasses Princess](#)  
A princess gets glasses in this classic video.
- [The King Who Couldn't See](#)  
A king sees fuzzy and blurry.
- [Excuse Me Chair](#)  
A chair looks for its glasses.

## Sesame on the Web

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Elmo does!

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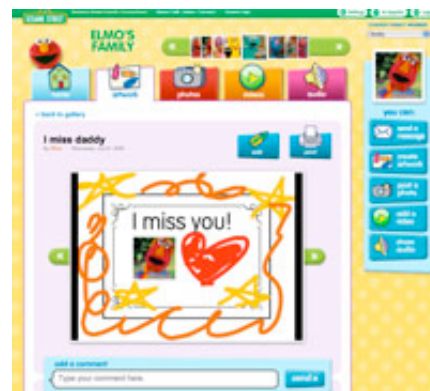
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## Max Needs Glasses

My son Max turned 2 in November, and a month later was diagnosed with an eye disorder. The doctor said if Max wore prescription glasses consistently, all day every day, his eye alignment and vision would improve. I was concerned, but focused on the fact that the problem was treatable.

The bigger issue was how in the world I was going to get my 2-year-old to wear glasses when I could barely get him to do so many other things, like wear a hat in the dead of winter.



### [Eye Examination](#)

Watch and then discuss Stacy's eye exam with your child.

## All in the Family

I wear glasses for reading and my husband Andy wears his glasses for driving. Max's grandparents, aunt, and uncles wear glasses, too. "Max, you're in our family glasses club!" we exclaimed.

To help Max understand why he needs to wear his glasses, we explained that eyeglasses are our helpers -- they help us (Mom, Dad, Grandma, and Grandpa) to see.

Like many 2-year-olds, Max likes to copy what he sees us do. So, Andy and I decided to get new glasses, hoping Max would want to get glasses, too. Max watched as the doctor examined our eyes. He helped us pick frames, and then saw us wear our new glasses.

### [Brand New Look](#)

Listen to a song about getting glasses.



Next was Max's turn to choose frames. Lately, we've been encouraging his independence by allowing him to make his own choices, from what to eat (banana or apple) to what color to wear (red or green). We thought he'd be more excited about his frames, if he chose them. So, we narrowed the selection and gave him the power to pick. He seemed game until it was time to wear the glasses. The novelty had worn off, and Max flat out refused. "No glasses!"

"But, Max, these are the blue ones you like. You chose these."

"No. No glasses! Noooooo! Max can not wear glasses!"

At first, Max wore his glasses for seconds, and soon he progressed to minutes. But, then we had a setback. A week after getting them, Max threw them down, scratching one lens pretty badly. We bought a spare. We needed to show Max how to take care of his things, including his fragile glasses. Every day we showed him how to hold, clean, and put them away in the case. Like most toddlers, he responds well to praise, especially when he's learning something new. Whether he wore his glasses for 30 seconds or one hour, I praised him. When he took off his glasses and put them down gently, I said, "Good job, Max."

## Feelings About Being Seen

Max is the only one of his playmates with glasses. Naturally, his friends were curious at first, and pulled at the glasses. Max was sensitive to the sudden wave of attention from family, friends, and strangers on the street. He withdrew and wanted to play alone more than usual.

Sometimes Max would wear the glasses for extended periods, and forget he even had them on. Phew! But inevitably, a grownup would make a comment: "Wow, nice glasses! How CUTE! Are those real?"



### [Some are Different](#)

causing Max to instantly remove his glasses. What was I to do? I couldn't exactly wear a sign saying, "Please don't mention the glasses!" We both had to learn how to deal with it. I suggested to Max that when someone says something nice, he could say "thank you." And, when he got upset from a comment and took off his glasses, I encouraged him to express his feelings to me, and we tried putting them on again later.

In time, Max got used to the attention. Close friends and family wore their glasses when Max was around. At playgroup, one mom got Max to wear them if she put them on him, instead of me. At school, his teacher was very helpful. I'd arrive at his classroom, glasses in hand, and in a flash, she'd have them on Max. But, at pick up time, off they came! Considering his never-ending "NOs" (food, sleep, coming, going, changes, etc.), I called this progress. And I was grateful for the support and understanding we received.

### Same and Different

Elmo and Abby find ways they are the same.

### Feelings

Talking tips, videos and fun ideas to help your child manage their emotions.

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## Making it Fun

Like getting kids to do anything they don't want to do, the best strategy is to make it fun. So, I collected pictures of people and animals wearing glasses. I pointed out TV characters that wore glasses. Max said, "Like Max!" I bought books. He liked *I Need Glasses* by Charlie Thomas and *The Eye Book* by Dr. Seuss.

When he refused to wear the glasses, I'd get frustrated. One friend reminded me to find the humor and make it a game. So, I gathered an assortment of eyewear. I wore a pair of giant joke glasses on my head, instead of on my nose. Max said, "Mommy, funny! Put on nose."

I relaxed and worried less. I started using a casual "by-the-way" tone. For example, if I caught Max rubbing his eyes and saying they hurt, I'd respond, "Wearing glasses will help your eyes feel better." If I saw him squinting or bumping into things, I'd say, "Glasses help us see." Then I quickly dropped the subject. When he wore his glasses for longer stretches, I let him choose a sticker to put on his eyeglass case. Soon it was covered in smiley faces, cats, trains, and stars. I moved the glasses from up high (where I could keep track of them) to down low on his table so he could reach them easily and feel that he was in charge of them.

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## New Green Glasses

Months passed and it was time for another eye exam. Going to checkups gives Max a chance to see other children wearing glasses. Each visit is a little easier because he knows what to expect.

But we got bad news. Max's eyes were worse. He needed to wear glasses ALL DAY EVERY DAY. I asked the doctor to explain this directly to Max. Among other things, she told him he was brave. He listened and seemed to understand.

On the way home he said, "Max wants green glasses!"

"Green it is!" I replied.

Max and I listed all the things we could think of that were green, his new favorite color. He was excited. When we got his new pair, he put them on right away and he told everyone, "Max has new green glasses!"

Now when he takes them off he says, "Time for a break from glasses."

"Max, you can put them back on in five minutes." He usually does.



### Doctor Visits

Watch, explore, and play as you pick up tips about going to the doctor.

When he refuses, I ask him, "What did the doctor tell you?"

"Max to wear glasses all day every day."

Last week he spontaneously said, "I love my glasses." I couldn't believe it. We certainly don't get "YES" all the time, but it's not all "NO" anymore. It is an ongoing process and like eating and sleeping, eventually things improve. But he still won't wear a hat...

Elana A. Halberstadt  
Sesame Workshop

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