



Driving into winter sun

During the winter blinding glare caused by a low sun, or by bright light reflecting off snow, puddles, the car in front, or even your own bonnet can be potentially lethal, particularly when driving at speed.

Glare is frequently cited as the cause of road accidents, but wearing the right pair of sunglasses can prevent this.



There is some confusion though about what sort of sunglasses you should wear when driving.

There are two requirements for driving lenses – vision must remain clear, and sufficient light to let you see properly must reach your eyes.

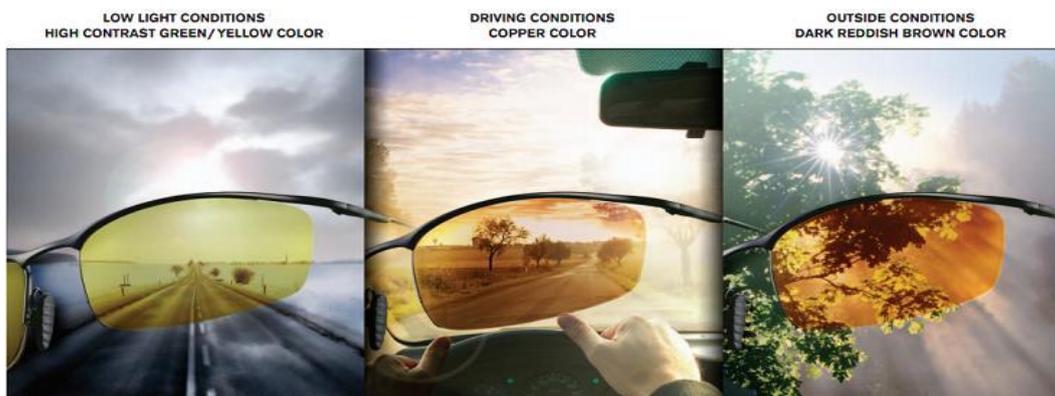
Sunglasses sold for general use can be too dark or unsuitable for driving.

Sun lenses for driving fall into two main categories - 'fixed' and 'variable' tint.

Fixed tint lenses remain the same irrespective of light conditions.

Variable tint lenses, known as 'photochromic' lenses, change their tint density when exposed to certain kinds of light.

However, variable lenses that only react to UV light are not suitable for driving because car windscreens filter out UV, slowing and limiting the reaction of the lenses.



For driving your lenses need to react to visible light and UV to ensure that they will adapt to the varying light conditions when driving.

- Tinted lenses are graded according to the density of the tint, and all sunglasses should, by law, be labelled and show the filter category number.
- Lenses with light transmission less than 75% are unsuitable for night driving.
- Yellow tinted lenses are not recommended for night driving. The tint is likely to be unperceivable anyway if the lens has a light transmission factor of 75% or more to meet night driving requirements.
- Lenses with light transmission less than 8% are unsuitable for day or night driving.
- Due to the light levels within the car, filter category 2 lenses which transmit between 18% and 43% of light are recommended for daytime driving.
- Filter category 4 lenses only transmit between 3% and 8% of light and are not suitable for driving at any time. Sunglasses with these lenses should, by law, be labelled 'Not suitable for driving or road use'.

All sunglasses should carry the CE mark and meet the European Standard BS EN 1836:2005.

A good quality anti-reflection coating is recommended, along with a hard coating to protect the lenses from scratches.

Sunglasses with deep side arms can block side, or peripheral, vision and are not generally recommended for driving.

Summary of recommendations from the A.A.

- Have a thorough eye examination every two years to find out if you need prescription lenses within your sunglasses.
- Discuss the options for sun and glare protection with your optician.
- Consider a specialist driving lens or tint.
- Be aware that your everyday sunglasses might not be suitable for driving.
- Always keep a spare pair of driving sunglasses in the car.
- Remember, the onus is on you to have good vision - failing to have your vision corrected and protected from the sun could invalidate your insurance if you are involved in a road traffic accident.

If you have found this article interesting and have questions regarding it, then please do get in touch either for a chat by phone, or please feel free to email me.

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