

Exploring Google Glass through eyes of early users

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In this Wednesday, May 29, 2013 file photo, Sarah Hill, a Google Glass contest winner, of Columbia, Mo., tries out the device, in New York. "This is like having the Internet in your eye socket," Hill said. "But it's less intrusive than I thought it would be. I can totally see how this would still let you still be in the moment with the people around you." (AP Photo/Frank Franklin II)

Geeks aren't the only people wearing Google Glass. Among the people testing Google Inc.'s wearable computer are teachers, dentists, doctors, hair stylists, architects, athletes and even a zookeeper.

Some 10,000 people are trying out an early version of Glass, most of them selected as part of a contest.

The Associated Press spoke to Glass owners who have been using the device: Sarah Hill, a former TV broadcaster and current [military veterans](#) advocate, and Deborah Lee, a stay-at-home mom.

Glass is designed to work like a smartphone that's worn like a pair of glasses. Although it looks like a prop from a science fiction movie, the device is capturing imaginations beyond the realm of nerds.

The trio's favorite feature, by far, is the hands-free camera that shoots photos and video through [voice commands](#). (Images can also be captured by pressing a small button along the top of the right frame of Glass.) They also like being able to connect to the Internet simply by tapping on the right frame of Glass to turn it on and then swiping along the same side to scroll through a menu. That menu allows them to do such things as get directions on Google's map or find a piece of information through Google's search engine. The information is shown on a thumbnail-sized transparent screen attached just above the right eye to stay out of a user's [field of vision](#).

Among the biggest shortcomings they cited was Glass' short [battery life](#), especially if a lot of video is being taken. Although Google says Glass should last for an entire day on a single [battery charge](#) for the typical user, Hill said there were times when she ran out of power after 90 minutes to two hours during periods when she was recording a lot of video.

Glass' speaker, which relies on a [bone conduction](#) technology, also is inadequate, according to the testers the AP interviewed. They said the speaker, which transmits sound through the skull to allow for ambient noise, can be difficult to hear in any environment other than a quiet

room.

"If you are out in the street or anywhere else where there is any noise, it's impossible to hear," Lee said. "That has been challenging because there is no way to adjust it. If you could adjust the sound, I think it would solve a lot of problems."



In this July 31, 2013 file photo, Associated Press reporter Michael Liedtke models Google Glass at a Google base camp in San Francisco. Google Inc. is touting Glass as a liberating breakthrough that will make technology more convenient and less obnoxious in social situations than checking a smartphone to see what's happening in your digital realm. Critics deride Glass as another disturbing example of how enslaved people are to their devices and a sign that technology is obliterating personal privacy. (AP Photo/File)

Hill, 42, became a Glass evangelist shortly after she picked up the device at Google's New York offices in May.

"This is like having the Internet in your eye socket," Hill said. "But it's less intrusive than I thought it would be."

The liberating aspects of Glass came into sharper focus for Hill as she took a cab to the airport for her flight home. During the taxi ride, she began a video call on Google Hangout. As the cab was preparing to drop her off at the curb, Hill was about to end the call so she could carry her baggage.

"That's when it hit me that, 'Holy cow, I don't have to cut the call off,'" Hill recalled. "I could continue talking because I didn't have to hold a phone. So I carried on a conversation through the airport and people were staring at me like, 'What is that thing on your face?'"

Hill became accustomed to the quizzical looks as she wore Glass to community gatherings, restaurants and shopping excursions. The encounters usually led to her offering others to try on Glass, and most were impressed, Hill said.

Hill has already used Glass to provide a tour of the World War II memorial in Washington, D.C., for veterans who were too old or ill to make the journey themselves.

Lee, has been relying on Glass mostly to capture precious moments with her 9-month-old daughter, Maddie. Lee, 34, told Glass to take the pictures as she tickled and kissed her daughter's tummy.

"Obviously, you can't do that with a phone in your hand, so I am totally loving Glass," Lee said. "It has really been great."



In this Friday, July 26, 2013 file photo, Google Glass, a device which offers video recording, photographic, and Internet access capabilities while worn like a pair of glasses, rests on a table in the offices of web development firm Whiteboard in Chattanooga, Tenn. Whiteboard was selected to beta test the device in Google's "If I had Glass" campaign after they tweeted that they would use the device to record video of daily life in rural Cambodia. (AP Photo/Chattanooga Times Free Press, Doug Strickland, File)

Glass also allowed Lee to set up live video sessions with her parents so they could see Maddie eat her first solid food just as she saw it. "I am capturing all these tiny moments that are really exciting with a baby," Lee said.

Glass' ability to take hands-free pictures and video has raised concerns

among privacy watchdogs who believe the device will make it easier to secretly record the activities of other people. But Levy is convinced that what Glass can do isn't much different than what many people already do with their smartphones.

Some analysts question whether Glass will have mass appeal once it hits the market. Skeptics who have seen the early participants walking around wearing Glass believe the device will eventually be remembered as a geeky curiosity that never lived up to its hype.

Angela McIntyre, a research director for Gartner Inc., believes the retail price for Glass will have to plummet to \$200 to make a significant dent. Early testers had to pay \$1,500 for the device, though Google hopes to bring that price down by the time of its mass-market release next year.

Even then, McIntyre believes smartwatches, another type of Internet-connected device starting to appear on the market, will win a bigger following than Glass. "Most people are just more used to putting technology on their wrist," she said.

In a recent report on wearable computing, Forrester Research analyst Sarah Rotman Epps predicted Glass will appeal largely to "young, socially connected tech optimists" and professionals, such as surgeons, construction managers and even farmers, who could use the device as part of their jobs.

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