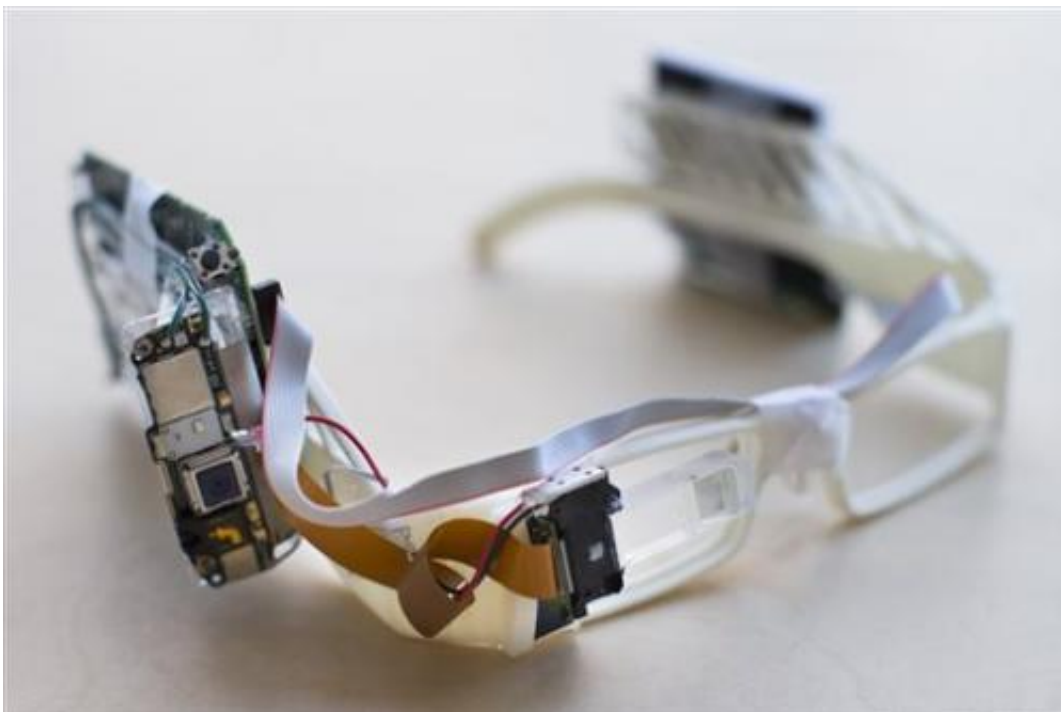


Google hopes designer frames will sharpen Glass

January 28 2014, by Barbara Ortutay



A prototype of Google Glass frames complete with exposed circuit boards and wiring rests on a table at the Google Glass Basecamp space at Chelsea Market, Friday, Jan. 24, 2014, in New York. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

Google Glass is getting glasses. The computerized, Internet-connected goggles don't actually come with lenses in its frame. Starting Tuesday, Google is offering an optional attachment for prescription lenses and new styles of detachable sunglasses.

The move comes as Google Inc. prepares to make Glass available to the general population later this year. Currently, Glass is available only to the tens of thousands of people who are testing and creating apps for it.

Glass is basically a small computer, with a camera and a display screen above the wearer's right eye. The device sits roughly at eyebrow level, higher than where eyeglasses would go.

It lets wearers surf the Web, ask for directions and take photos or videos. Akin to wearing a smartphone without having to hold it in your hands, Glass also lets people read their email, share photos on Twitter and Facebook, translate phrases while traveling or partake in video chats. Glass follows some basic voice commands, spoken after the words "OK, Glass."

The gadget itself is not changing with this announcement. Rather, Google plans to make various attachments available for people who wear glasses or sunglasses.

The Mountain View, California, company is now offering four styles of frames for prescription lenses. It's also offering two new types of shades, in addition to the one previously available. The frames cost \$225 and the shades, \$150. That's on top of the \$1,500 price of Glass.



The new Google Glass "Thin" prescription frames in "tangerine" color rests on a table at the Google Glass Basecamp space at Chelsea Market, Friday, Jan. 24, 2014, in New York. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

Users can take the frames to any vision care provider for prescription lenses. Google says it is working with insurance provider Vision Service Plan to train eye-care providers around the U.S. on how to work with Glass.

Google says some insurance plans may cover the cost of the frames. VSP, which covers 64 million people in the U.S., will also provide coverage for the frames and prescription lenses as part of its partnership with Google. VSP's typical allowances for frames can range from \$80 to \$160.



The new Google Glass "Bold" prescription frames in "shale" color rests on a table at the Google Glass Basecamp space at Chelsea Market, Friday, Jan. 24, 2014, in New York. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

Isabelle Olsson, the lead designer for Google Glass, says the new frames open the spectacles up to a larger audience.

She demonstrated the new [frames](#) to The Associated Press last week at the Google Glass Basecamp, an airy loft on the eighth floor of New York City's Chelsea Market. It's one of the places where Glass users go to pick up their wares and learn how to use them. Walking in, visitors are greeted, of course, by a receptionist wearing Google Glass.



The new Google Glass "Bold" prescription frames in "shale" color rests on a table at the Google Glass Basecamp space at Chelsea Market, Friday, Jan. 24, 2014, in New York. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

"We want as many people as possible to wear it," she said.

To that end, Glass's designers picked four basic but distinct frame styles. On one end is a chunky "bold" style that stands out. On the other is a "thin" design—to blend in as much as possible.

Olsson said Google won't be able to compete with the thousands of styles offered at typical eyeglasses stores. Instead, Glass's designers looked at what types of glasses are most popular, what people wear the most and, importantly, what they look good in.



The new Google Glass "Classic" sunglass frames in "charcoal" color rests on a table at the Google Glass Basecamp space at Chelsea Market, Friday, Jan. 24, 2014, in New York. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

The latter has been a constant challenge for the nascent wearable technology industry, especially for something like Google Glass, designed to be worn on your face. When Google unveiled Glass in a video nearly two years ago, it drew unfavorable comparisons to Bluetooth headsets, the trademarks of the fashion-ignorant technophile.

In designing Google Glass, Olsson and her team focused on three design principles with the goal of creating something that people want to wear. These were lightness, simplicity and scalability. That last one means having different options available for different people—just as there are different styles of headphones, from in-ear buds to huge aviator-style monstrosities.

Google Glass currently comes in five colors—"charcoal," a lighter shade of gray called "shale," white, tangerine and bright blue "sky." The frame attachments out Tuesday are all titanium. Users can mix and match.

"People need to be able to choose," Olsson said. "These products need to be lifestyle products."

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