

DMV Examiner Evaluation Suggestions for Bioptic Drivers

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Background:

A bioptic telescope enables the user to see further forward than they can with their normal vision (using conventional eyeglasses if required). Since bioptic telescopes provide a narrow field of view they are used only intermittently (similar to the use of mirrors) to allow the driver to see signs, signals, traffic, road conditions and obstacles, etc. sooner than they would otherwise. We expect visually impaired drivers using bioptics to be both visually and cognitively alert because using a bioptic for driving is a more demanding activity.

Since the majority of the time the bioptic driver should *NOT* be looking through the telescope, the individual must be a competent driver without the bioptic. If they are not a competent driver, a bioptic will not improve their driving performance, however a bioptic telescope may help a competent visually impaired driver to be a safer driver.

Evaluation suggestions:

The examiner should expect that an effective bioptic driver should be able to recognize signs and other targets at a distance approximately the same as that of the examiner. The examiner might also ask the driver to explain how they use their bioptic. They should describe its use in a manner consistent with the expectation of brief sighting as described above.

While driving with the bioptic:

1. Have the driver call out the information on signs and traffic signals as requested by the examiner. You should watch to confirm that the driver dips their head to look into the bioptic to answer the question. For instance:
 - a. "There is a sign coming up on the right side- What does it say?"
 - b. "Tell me the number on the next speed limit sign you see"
 - c. "What is the color of the traffic light you are approaching?"
2. Identify any mail trucks, police vehicles, school buses or ambulances you see while driving.
3. Identify any road obstacles encountered while driving. These may include:
 - a. Trash on the road
 - b. Traffic cones
 - c. Flagman
 - d. Pedestrians
 - e. Police directing traffic
 - f. Bicycle riders

In addition to the regular driving assessment factors normally addressed during a road test, a driver using a bioptic telescope should be expected to demonstrate that:

1. They have used a bioptic telescope for at least 60 days prior to pursuing a bioptic driver's license.
2. They have the ability to alternate vision between the regular eyeglass lens and the telescope eyepiece and can locate stationary objects within the telescopic field of view while moving.
3. They can locate a moving object with their regular vision and be able to switch to looking through the telescope and be able to locate and track the moving object while moving.
4. After a brief sighting through the telescope they can remember and interpret what was seen.
5. They can safely operate the vehicle under varying levels of illumination as might be encountered in inclement weather and when driving between brightly lit and shaded areas and when driving into glare.