
Eye Test Innovators

Segment Length: 4:02 minutes

Lesson Description:

If you could, would you take an eye exam online? The American Optometric Association says that these online tests are dangerous. But are they? Is this a case of concerned vision care providers trying to save us from dangerous innovations, or is the American Optometric Association simply trying to protect its members' jobs against this innovative competition? This video looks at online eye exams and those trying to ban them.

Concepts & Key Terms:

Optometrists—Doctors who examine the eyes and other parts of the visual system. They also diagnose and treat visual problems and manage diseases, injuries, and other disorders of the eyes. They prescribe eyeglasses or contact lenses as needed.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- discuss the role of optometrists in vision care.
- explain the arguments used by the American Optometric Association and Opternative.
- evaluate the arguments for and against online eye tests.
- predict the results if current businesses were able to persuade government officials to prevent the development and use of new processes and technologies that might eliminate their jobs.

Preview Activity and Questions:

Have students answer the following questions in their notebooks:

What innovative ideas and technologies can you think of that led to some people losing their jobs? What would be different today if those ideas and technologies were not allowed to develop?

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer the preview question. After a few minutes, poll the students and ask them to discuss their answers.

Viewing Guide:

It is recommended that teachers show the video twice: once to allow students to view it and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

Answers to Viewing Guide

1. researched
2. diseases
3. vetoed
4. lobby

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Viewing Guide

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. It's hard to believe that this could replicate what optometrists do. But the author of the book *Bottleneckers*, who _____ this exam, says it is just as good as an in-person exam.
2. The American Optometric Association says a home test is unacceptably risky because no optometrist is there to look for _____.
3. Bottleneckers like the optometrists have clout in legislatures, because they give the politicians money. When South Carolina's legislature banned the at-home test, then Governor Nikki Haley spoke up for the patients. She _____ the ban. She said it was anti-competitive. And it is!
4. It's good to have a choice! These glasses were the correct prescription, for less money. The optometry _____ doesn't want us to have that choice? No, they don't! Bottleneckers make life worse for you.

Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:

There were several references to "bottleneckers" in the video. What is a bottleneck? _____

What do you think is meant by "bottleneckers"? _____

Why do you think the American Optometric Association opposes Opternative's online eye exams? _____

Should people have the choice to have online exams? _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. How often do you get your eyes checked?
2. Do any of you think you might need glasses but do nothing about it? Why not?
3. Who has the most to lose from online eye exams? Explain.
4. Why did Steven Lee develop the app for online eye tests?
5. When do doctors mostly work? When do most people work or go to school? Why should we be forced to have eye exams on doctors' schedules and availability rather than our own?
6. Why would politicians feel the need to get involved with this issue?
7. Why do politicians want to regulate? Are their motives to protect us? Are they trying to protect existing businesses? Should they?
8. Do you think politicians are smarter than other people? Why / Why not? Should elected officials decide what technologies should be allowed?
9. When government regulations protect existing businesses, from whom are they being protected? Can you think of other occupations that might have bottlenecks?
10. Should we judge new technologies based on the number of jobs that might be lost or that it might create? Can we know in advance how many jobs will be lost or gained? What if the ice block industry convinced government to ban refrigerators because they were dangerous (chance of electrocution, coolant Freon is a pollutant) or caused the loss of jobs?
11. In the video, John Stossel said that the American Optometric Association has persuaded 13 states to draft bills banning at-home tests. How can states ban online tests? How do you think those laws work?
12. Do you believe people should be able to choose for themselves whether to have an online eye test, or should the government make that choice for everyone? Explain.

Discuss These Lines from the Video:

1. The American Optometric Association says a home test is unacceptably risky, because no optometrist is there to look for diseases.
2. It is a tool that allows you to take a test or be screened.
3. They [the Optometric Association] want to force everyone to go to an eye doctor. They're the bottleneck here, and they've persuaded 13 states to draft bills banning at-home tests.
4. Bottlenecks like the optometrists have clout in legislatures, because they give the politicians money.
5. In a few days I got this prescription, which turned out to be the same prescription I get from my expensive eye doctor.

6. Bottleneckers make life worse for you.

Quotes for Discussion:

The principal goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done—men who are creative, inventive, and discovers. The second goal of education is to form minds which can be critical, can verify, and not accept everything they are offered. – Jean Piaget

Without change there is no innovation, creativity, or incentive for improvement. Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable. – William Pollard

Never before in history has innovation offered promise of so much to so many in so short a time. – Bill Gates

I think frugality drives innovation, just like other constraints do. One of the only ways to get out of a tight box is to invent your way out. – Jeff Bezos

Changes call for innovation, and innovation leads to progress. – Li Keqiang

Every once in a while, a new technology, an old problem, and a big idea turn into an innovation. – Dean Kamen

The history of innovation is the story of ideas that seemed dumb at the time. – Andy Dunn

Technological innovation is indeed important to economic growth and the enhancement of human possibilities. – Leon Kass

If mankind is to profit freely from the small and sporadic crop of the heroically gifted it produces, it will have to cultivate the delicate art of handling ideas. Psychology is now able to tell us with reasonable assurance that the most influential obstacle to freedom of thought and to new ideas is fear; and fear which can with inimitable art disguise itself as caution, or sanity, or reasoned skepticism, or on occasion even as courage. – Wilfred Trotter

Activities:

1. Show the class the Stossel video: Stop! You Need a License To Do that Job!

http://stosselintheclassroom.org/videos/need_a_license/

2. Have one or more students try an online eye test in class. The links below have online tests you can use.

<https://www.personaleyeyes.com.au/online-eye-test/index.php>

<https://www.simplecontacts.com/>

<https://www.opternative.com/how-it-works>

3. Print copies of the anti-railroad poster and distribute to groups of students. Ask them to discuss the intent of the poster and who might have produced it. Is there any connection to bottleneckers?

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/461056080575275057/>

4. Read the article “Bottleneckers: The Origins of Occupational Licensing and What Can Be Done About Its Excesses.” Then write a summary using Cornell (two-column) notes.

<https://fedsoc.org/commentary/publications/bottleneckers-the-origins-of-occupational-licensing-and-what-can-be-done-about-its-excesses>

5. What other occupations have bottleneckers? How have they attempted to slow or stop progress?
6. Research and report on the occupational licenses required in your state.
7. Research the term “creative destruction” and explain how it relates to bottleneckers.
8. Read and write a book report about: *Bottleneckers: Gaming the Government for Power and Private Profit* by Dick Carpenter and Chip Mellor.
9. What questions would you want to ask Dr. Lee if you could interview him?
10. Read and summarize what the American Optometric Association says about online eye exams.

<https://www.aoa.org/online-eye-test>

11. In the video, John Stossel said that the American Optometric Association has persuaded 13 states to draft bills banning at-home tests. What has happened since he said that in August 2017? How many states have banned the tests? How do those laws work?

12. Watch Dr. Steven Lee’s TEDxIIT talk, Mission For Vision.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrhD7-DmLjg>

13. Read and summarize the White House Fact Sheet published during the presidency of Barack Obama: New Steps to Reduce Unnecessary Occupation Licenses that are Limiting Worker Mobility and Reducing Wages

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/17/fact-sheet-new-steps-reduce-unnecessary-occupation-licenses-are-limiting>

14. Read and write an essay about the article “The Iceman's Job was Destroyed. Good! Social progress means shifting the way labor is allocated” by T. Norman Van Cott

<https://fee.org/articles/the-icemans-job-was-destroyed-good/>

15. Compare and contrast the websites of Personal Eyes and Opternative.

<https://www.personaleyeyes.com.au/online-eye-test/index.php>
<https://www.opternative.com/how-it-works>

16. Read about differences between ophthalmologists, optometrists, and opticians, and write a summary explaining how they differ.

<https://aapos.org/terms/conditions/132>

17. Using the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook website, write a report about the optometry profession.

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/optometrists.htm>

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Per _____

Teacher _____

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- P = Plus:** What are some potential positive effects of online eye exams?
- M = Minus:** What are some potential negative effects of online eye exams?
- I = Interesting:** What are some interesting aspects of online eye exams?

+ Plusses +	- Minuses -	I

Weighing the plusses and minuses of online eye exams, would you take an online eye exam? _____

Why / Why not? _____

Regardless of your answer to the previous question, should people have the right to decide for themselves? _____

Why? / Why not? _____
