

Be cautious and know your rights when shopping online

Take extra care when shopping online. Always do some research before placing an order or doing business. Remember, if it looks too good to be true, then it probably is – don't find out the hard way.

Do some research

Bad experiences shopping online can vary from slow or non-delivery of goods right through to scams where people lose hundreds or thousands of pounds.

When shopping on the internet, whether a website, online marketplace or social media platform, it's not always easy to know who you're dealing with. For example, just because a web address ends in '.co.uk' there's no guarantee that the business is based in the UK – check the seller has a UK contact address.

Before buying online, including if you're booking a holiday, you're advised to use the internet to research if there are any problems with the business you are thinking of dealing with.

Searching online using the business's name followed by the word 'scam' can be particularly helpful, as can searching online reviews and forums.

Always check reviews and feedback on sellers. However, even customer reviews can be fake, particularly those that are over-complimentary and at odds to the many other reviews posted. Never rely on reviews from one website

Your rights

When you buy goods online from a trader, the goods must be of satisfactory quality as described and fit for purpose.

If there's a problem with the item you could be entitled to a refund, replacement or repair within the first 30 days from when you bought it.

A refund can be claimed for up to six months from purchase if the goods can't be repaired or replaced.

As well as this, you will normally have up to 14 days after receiving the goods to change your mind and get a refund.

However, when buying from a private seller you should be aware that your rights are different.

You need to be careful if taking advantage of deals on online marketplaces such as Amazon, Gumtree or eBay, or on social media.

Goods must be as described, but this is the only requirement and you may encounter practical difficulties in sorting an issue if things go wrong. Sellers may also be overseas.

You can get more information at this link:

Buying online advice

Before buying something online:

- make sure the website you're on is authentic and the payment page secure by checking that the address starts with 'https' and there's a closed padlock in the address bar
- always pay by card or another secure method such as PayPal
- never pay by bank or money transfers, which are a preferred method by scammers
- be careful the goods aren't counterfeit
- always read the small print if you see 'free' or 'low-cost' trial goods
- if it's events tickets, make sure you only buy from official websites
- always log out of an online shopping account once you've paid
- check the seller's terms and conditions, including cancellation rights and any dispute resolution systems
- watch out for emails or texts from parcel delivery firms telling you to open an attachment for your delivery note – a real delivery firm wouldn't send you that
- be cautious about links or attachments in unexpected emails or messages

If a business tells you that you have to make a transfer as their card facilities are down, then try another company.

How to complain about online shopping

Anyone who wants to complain about an online shopping experience, or feels that they are a victim of a scam or suspect a scam, should contact [Consumerline](#) either by phone on 0300 123 6262 or [online](#).

More useful links