

There are a number of checks you can do when shopping online to avoid problems or scams. Take some time to find out about your consumer rights when buying from companies or sellers online. You can get information from:

- Citizens Advice - [online advice](#) and [the consumer service](#)
- your local Citizens Advice office
- Which?
- Martin Lewis's Money Saving Expert website
- Your local Trading Standards may run local information or visit community groups to give advice and information.

Some advice given on social media may not be qualified or regulated advice. Being given incorrect advice could make your problem worse. Think about why you are buying the item online and answer the following questions. These suggestions may help you feel more confident when shopping online.

- **Do I know who the seller is?** (This is the trader/ company/ seller)
- **Can I find their trading address?** The trader should give a geographical address rather than a PO Box address. Also, remember if the item is coming from the EU, you may have additional charges. This is information a company or trader must give.
- **What is the total cost of the item?** There may be fees such as VAT, delivery, returns and possible customs fees.
- **Who is responsible for the cost of returning the item?** Lots of companies provide free return postage, but don't assume this is always the case. If the item is faulty, damaged or misdescribed, you can ask the seller to arrange a collection and either refund or place the item.
- **Do they provide information about returning or cancelling the item?** You should be given information about your cancellation or return rights. You automatically get a 14-day 'cooling-off period' when you buy something you haven't seen in person. There are some exceptions, such as bespoke items or something that will deteriorate quickly (flowers or food items, for example.) The cooling-off period starts the day after you receive your order.

- **When will it be delivered?** As much as possible, try to arrange to be home when the parcel is being delivered. This will help to avoid parcels that go missing. Alternatively, you can arrange to use drop off zones listed as available, such as a nearby post office or shop. It is important to know that if you indicate a safe space to leave the item if anything should happen to it, it will be your responsibility, not the responsibility of the seller or delivery company.
- **Who do you complain to if a parcel goes missing, doesn't arrive or is damaged?** Your contract is with the company you bought the item from, so any problems should be addressed to the company, not the delivery company. If the company tells you to do this, it is wrong. They are responsible for the delivery of the item.
- **Could you visit a store and buy the item?** Depending on the item, it might be more convenient to visit the store and check the item or try on clothes.
- **Does the website offer a complaints process or a mediation service?** A mediation service is useful if you have a problem with an online marketplace seller that you find difficult to resolve.
- **Could it be a scam?** There is often a risk that a website could be a cloned version of a genuine company, be it a short term pop up or a scammer operating on an online marketplace. Look at top tips and guidance about recognising potential scams. Scams Action service, Citizens Advice, and Get Safe online (purchase and payments section.) can provide information about this.

[www.getsafeonline.org/personal/article-category/shopping-banking/](http://www.getsafeonline.org/personal/article-category/shopping-banking/)

More information on how to shop safely can be found at the National Cyber Security Centre [www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/shopping-online-securely](http://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/shopping-online-securely)

To report an online scam or get further advice from Citizens Advice Scams Action Service, call 0808 2505050, or you can talk to an adviser online.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/scams/check-if-something-might-be-a-scam/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/scams/check-if-something-might-be-a-scam/)

Citizens Advice consumer helpline 0808 223 1133, Welsh-speaking adviser 0808 223 1144.

Relay UK - if you can't hear or speak on the phone, you can type what you want to say: 18001 then 0808 223 1133.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue/)