

**I'm considering shopping online, because there seem to be a lot of bargains, but I'm a bit concerned about buying goods without seeing them first. What happens if something goes wrong, or if I change my mind after seeing something in reality? I don't have money to lose right now.**

You're not alone being cautious about shopping online. Over the last year Citizens Advice Consumer Service has dealt with just under 123,000 cases in relation to online shopping.

Most of the time, when you buy something online you automatically get a 14-day 'cooling-off period' which starts the day after you receive your order. There doesn't need to be anything wrong with the item for you to get a refund. Many online sellers may offer more time, so make sure you check the terms and conditions before purchasing.

There are some exceptions, like buying something perishable or personalised. There are also exceptions if the product is sealed, like face masks or CDs.

If you do decide to return your item, you need to tell the seller you don't want the item within 14 days of receiving it. Once you've told the seller, you've got 14 days to send it back. The seller has to pay you the refund within 14 days from when they receive the item.

You may have to pay the cost of posting something back to the seller but you don't have to return the item in its original packaging as long as you've wrapped it safely. If you don't wrap it safely and the item gets damaged, the seller can reduce your refund.

It's a good idea to get a [certificate of posting](#) from Royal Mail when you post the item. You can use this to prove to the seller that you posted the item.

If you buy something online and the product is faulty (i.e. it's broken, unusable or doesn't match what was advertised), you have 30 days to ask for a refund from when you receive it. However, you can choose to accept a replacement or repair. After 30 days (and before six months) the seller must offer you a repair within a reasonable timeframe. If this isn't possible, they must offer you a replacement or a refund. Ask the seller for the easiest way to send the item back. You shouldn't have to pay.

If you order something and it doesn't arrive, it's the seller's responsibility to make sure the item is delivered to you. If the seller used a courier, they should chase the courier to find out what's happened to your order - it's not your responsibility.

Check the delivery address you gave the seller. Then contact them and ask where your order is. If the seller claims they've delivered it or don't know where it is, you can ask for a redelivery. You might also be able to get a refund in some circumstances.

Check out the [Citizens Advice website](#) or contact the Consumer Service helpline on 0808 223 1133 if you need more help.

***Free, confidential advice and help is available from South Lakes Citizens Advice on any aspect of debt, consumer problems, benefits, housing, employment or any other problems.***

***South Lakes Citizens Advice, your local charity, is here for you.***

***How to access:***

- ***Call 015394 46464 - this is being staffed from 9:30 – 2pm***
- ***Adviceline: 03444 111 444***
- ***email advice via our submission page on our website***  
***[www.southlakescab.org.uk](http://www.southlakescab.org.uk)***
- ***Help to Claim (Universal Support): 0800 144 8 444***