

## **Advantages of online shopping**

The advantages of online shopping can be summarised as the '3 C's'

- **Convenience:** You can shop online from the comfort of your own home, at a time to suit you. You don't have to travel to the shops, stand in queues waiting for service or to pay, or carry your purchases home. For older people who have mobility difficulties, or who do not have their own car, or who simply don't like the noise and stress of visiting a shopping centre, this can be a real benefit;
- **Choice:** Wherever you live, online shopping gives you access to all the major retailers, plus a host of specialist retailers, all over the world;
- **Cost:** Many goods are available online at a significant discount to the standard retail price. Price comparison websites enable you to find the best price very easily.

## **Disadvantages**

There are lots of stories of bad experiences of:

- Goods not being delivered or arriving damaged;
- Goods not fitting the description, or inferior alternatives being delivered;
- Delays in sending goods;
- Poor after-sales service;
- Misuse of credit or debit card details.

It is important to stress that these represent a tiny proportion of the millions of online transactions that take place each day. The best way to minimise the risk of such problems is only to use retailers you can trust. If an online retailer is part of a large company, then they have the same need to protect their reputation as the 'bricks and mortar' shops. When dealing with smaller, specialist companies, or individuals, there are checks which purchasers can easily make.

And there is legal protection for all transactions.

Shopsafe UK [www.shopsafe.co.uk/](http://www.shopsafe.co.uk/) operates a registration system for online shopping sites.

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## Safe shopping

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They suggest five questions to ask yourself before placing an order:

1. Do you trust the vendor?
2. Do they have a 'secure' server?
3. What are their delivery times?
4. Can you contact them if the order goes wrong?
5. Are there any hidden charges?

Their website gives more details of how to find the answers to these, and a good summary of consumers' rights when shopping online.

### Some more useful websites

#### **Action Fraud**

[www.actionfraud.org.uk](http://www.actionfraud.org.uk)

If you've been a victim of fraud, contact Action Fraud at [www.actionfraud.org.uk](http://www.actionfraud.org.uk) or call freephone 0300 123 2040.

#### **Consumer Direct**

[www.consumerdirect.gov.uk](http://www.consumerdirect.gov.uk)

Government website with advice about your rights as consumers. Some very good tips about recognising *scams* (confidence tricks).

#### **E-victims.com**

[www.e-victims.org](http://www.e-victims.org)

A website dedicated to helping people who have suffered bad experiences when shopping online.

#### **Get Safe online**

[www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org)

A joint initiative by the Government, business and the public sector. Its aim is to provide computer users with free, independent, user-friendly advice that will allow them to use the internet confidently, safely and securely.

#### **How to complain.com**

[www.howtocomplain.com](http://www.howtocomplain.com)

A website for people who need help to complain about goods or services.

#### **Shop Safe**

[www.shopsafe.co.uk](http://www.shopsafe.co.uk)

A directory of online shops, with good advice on safe online shopping.

#### **Think U Know**

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

Website with advice for children and parents about online safety.

#### **Trading Standards Central**

[www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk)

Consumer protection information in from the Trading Standards Institute.