

Rebecca Smithers, Consumer affairs correspondent <br />guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 9 March 2010 10.01 GMT <br />Article history</p><p align="justify"><br />UK consumers may be the biggest online shoppers in Europe, but we are less inclined to return goods bought via the internet than those purchased on the high street, research reveals today.</p><p align="justify"><br />A survey for the government found that more than 60% of shoppers were less likely to take back goods purchased online, compared with items purchased direct from shops.</p><p align="justify"><br />Tellingly, consumers also showed their ignorance and confusion about their legal rights for both types of purchase when it comes to refunds. Many did not realise, for example, that those buying online had the extra right of a seven-day cooling-off period.</p> UK consumers are ranked as Europe's biggest online shoppers, having spent £38bn last year, which accounts for 10% of total UK retail sales. <p align="justify"><br />The research was carried out by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills for a Know Your Rights campaign run by the government-funded Consumer Direct.</p><p align="justify"><br />It found that three-quarters (77%) of UK consumers did not know there were differences between online and high street consumer rights, while more than one in 10 (13%) admitted to not being sure of their consumer rights when making online purchases.</p><p align="justify"><br />The consumer minister, Kevin Brennan, said: "It is important we all know that most online goods can be returned with no questions asked within seven days. We want confident consumers who can assert their rights and get a good deal."</p><p align="justify"><br />The survey revealed that consumers were just as confused when shopping on the high street. Two-fifths thought that retailers always had a right to refuse a refund if they didn't have a receipt, and one in 10 believed goods could not be returned once they have left the store.</p><p align="justify"><br />Michele Shambrook, operations manager for Consumer Direct, said: "We want consumers to be more confident when shopping on the high street or online. People who are knowledgeable about their rights are more likely to get a fair deal, save money and resolve problems when things go wrong."</p><p align="justify"><br />Consumer rights: top tips<br />1. If you buy goods on the internet you have the same rights as if you were shopping on the high street. In addition, you have the right to a seven-day cooling-off period from the date you receive the goods, with the right to a full refund regardless of the reason for return. However, this doesn't apply in some situations, for example if the goods were personalised for you, were perishable, or are not in the same condition as when they were delivered.</p><p align="justify"><br />2. When you buy goods your contract is with the retailer not the manufacturer, and you should always go back to the retailer in the first instance to request an exchange or refund. If you have a manufacturer's warranty you can contact them as well as the retailer. And don't delay ♦ act as soon as you discover the fault.</p><p align="justify"><br />3. You do not need a receipt to obtain a refund for faulty goods. However, you may be required to show proof of purchase with a credit card slip or bank or credit card statement.</p><p align="justify"><br />4. Although you do not have the legal right to take back goods bought on the high street just because you have changed your mind, many stores do offer a "no questions asked" refund or exchange policy. Check the store policy when you buy.</p><p align="justify">Source: <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2010/mar/09/consumers-right-to-return-online-goods">http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2010/mar/09/consumers-right-to-return-online-goods</a></p>