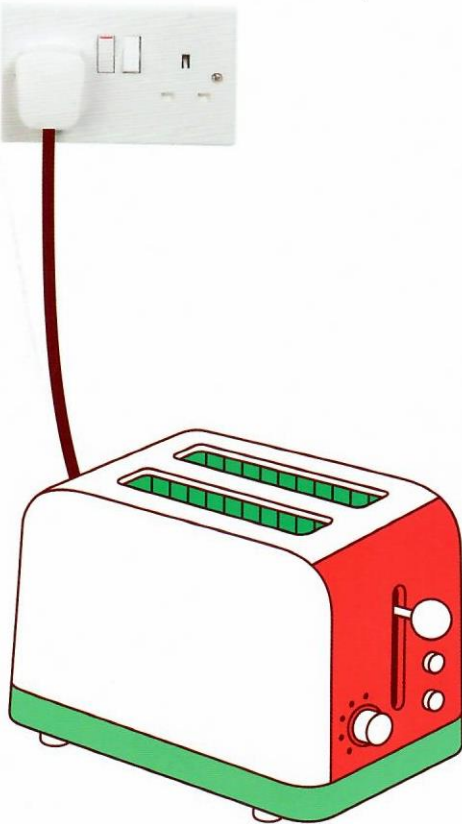


Safety guidance

**Buying
electrical
goods online?**

**The safe
shopper's
guide**



Every year around 70 deaths and 350,000 injuries in UK homes are caused by faulty electrics and electrical equipment. And nearly nine out of ten electrical fires are caused by products, either through misuse or faults.

The last few years have seen an increase in the number of counterfeit and sub-standard electrical products on the market. Hair styling products, mobile phone chargers and electronic games are among the top electrical fakes. Counterfeit electrical goods almost always contain incorrect or faulty parts that can overheat or break just days after purchase, increasing the risk of fire or electric shock.

Many people see cheap electrical goods as a bargain but if the product does turn out to be fake these goods are, at best, a waste of money. At worst, they could result in a house fire, severe injury or even the death of a loved one. The increase in the popularity of online shopping makes it even easier for dodgy goods to slip through the net.

The best way to protect yourself from substandard and counterfeit goods is to buy your electrical products from reputable retailers, on the high street or via their websites.

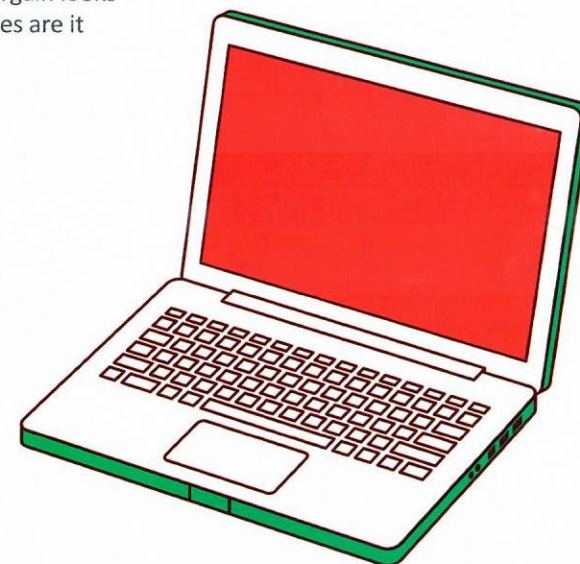
However, there are precautions you can take when buying from less well known sellers.

This guide will help you to look out for the most common problems with buying electrical products online, and make you aware of your rights.

Shopping Online

follow our top ten tips

- Check the voltage of products is 230V, 50Hz (the UK's usual domestic voltage) and that they are fitted with a three-pin UK plug or charger.
- Look for the seller's contact details. Make sure there is a full address and not just a PO Box number. Not all websites with a .co.uk address are based in the UK.
- Avoid buying second-hand products, especially if the guarantee or warranty has run out. You don't know what condition it's in.
- Look for websites that allow you to pay safely – these have a padlock symbol at the bottom of the screen when you are filling in your payment details.
- Do a price check and, if you have time, visit the high street too. If a bargain looks too good to be true, the chances are it probably is.
- Use online review websites to find out what people are saying about products and sellers.
- Read the product guarantees, sellers' terms and conditions, returns policies and privacy statements.
- Check that the site is a member of an online retail accrediting body, such as ISIS, which means they have signed up to certain service standards.
- If you use your credit card to spend £100 or more on an item, you can hold both the trader and credit card company liable if something goes wrong with the sale.
- Keep records of anything you order.



Don't fall for fake

Increasingly, fake products are sold online, often at “unbelievable” prices. If in doubt, e-mail the seller with questions and ask for more pictures of the product so that you can do a visual check.

Before you buy, check:

- Is the item much cheaper than you expected? (Although a clever counterfeiter can also copy the price!)
- Do website photos of the product and its packaging look genuine?
- Does the site offer information about user instructions and guarantees?
- Are the manufacturer’s contact details, and/or the product’s country of origin, provided on the site?

Buying second hand goods

If you must buy second-hand electrical products, try to buy from a business seller you know and trust. You still have some legal protection, as businesses selling second-hand electrical goods must ensure that the product meets legal safety requirements and is correctly labelled.

If you are buying from a private seller in an online auction, the seller’s only obligation is to accurately describe the item being sold. They can refuse responsibility for the quality of the product.

Steer clear of spam

Spam emails often try to lure you to certain websites. If you order from one of these, the chances are you will get fake goods, that is if you get anything at all.

Don't rely on a CE mark alone as a guarantee of safety. A CE mark on a product is simply a declaration by the manufacturer that the product meets all the requirements of European law and is safe to use. It can also be faked!

Problem products

Returning a recalled product is not always convenient, but it is worth it when you bear in mind that faulty products can cause a serious electric shock or fire. But do you know if any of the products in your home have been recalled?

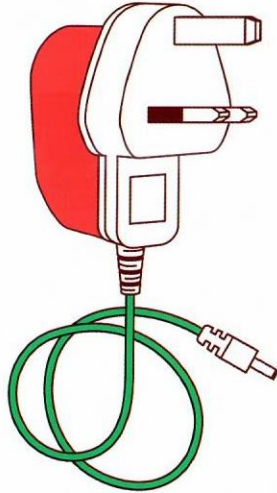
Recall information from the official EU recall system shows that the electrical goods most often reported as faulty or dangerous are:

- Electrical chargers.
- Adaptors, including those used for travel.
- Extension and spare product leads.
- Hairdryers, tongs and straighteners.
- Small kitchen appliances like kettles, toasters and irons.

Typically, the average success rate of an electrical product recall in the UK is just 10-20%. This means that there are potentially millions of recalled electrical items still in UK homes. As most of these products have been recalled because they offer a risk of electric shock or electrical fire, they present a serious risk.

Visit electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/recall to check the electrical products in your home by using our simple product checker.

If you suspect a product is dangerous to use, or that it is a fake copy of a well-known brand, you should contact your local Trading Standards office or Citizens Advice straight away. If you have any suspicions about the product's safety, or if you think it's a fake, do not use it.



When your product arrives

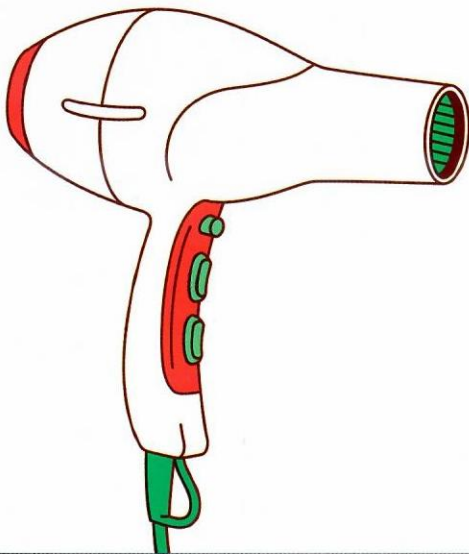
If you have ordered an electrical product online, carry out some basic checks before you start to use it.

If something seems wrong:

- Check that the packaging and delivery notes look genuine. Does the package contain instructions and a guarantee?
- Check for any damage and listen for loose fittings.
- Check the item has a UK plug. Make sure it is in good condition with the right size pins and properly attached to the cord.

STOP using the product immediately, turn it off and unplug it from the socket if any of the following happens:

- It isn't working properly or won't work all the time.
- It speeds up or down without warning.
- The outer casing seems too hot to the touch.
- You can see smoke coming from it, or smell burning.



Returning faulty products

If you believe that a product is faulty, you should first contact the seller. Put your complaint in writing and keep copies of any correspondence.

If you feel that their response is unsatisfactory, there are a number of things you can do.

- If you are making a claim for a refund, repair or replacement, you can take advice from Citizens Advice.
- Some auction websites or third party bodies (e.g. PayPal, NoChex etc.) can help – see their terms and conditions.
- Contact your local council and ask to speak to their trading standards department.
- If the product cost more than £100 and you paid by credit card, contact your credit card company. They may refund you and take up your complaint with the seller.
- Contact the manufacturer directly and speak to their customer services team – but remember, you still need to go through the seller for a refund.
- If the seller is a member of a trade association, or an online accreditation body such as ISIS, you can ask them to look into your complaint.
- A last resort is to take the seller to court, which may cost you money. If you win, your court costs will be paid. However, if you lose, you will have to pay the seller's legal bill as well as your own.

Contact details for the organisations mentioned above can be found at the end of this leaflet.

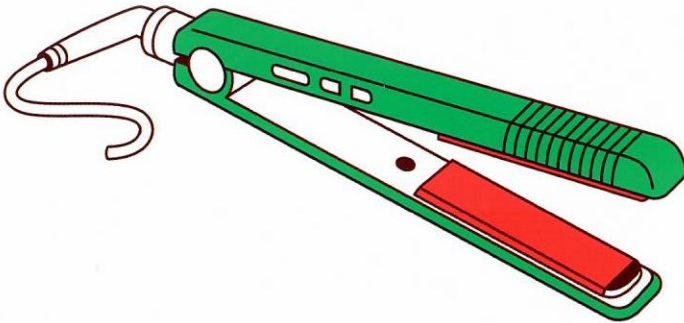
Know your rights

Buying from UK companies

Online buyers have protection in law against unfair trading through the Sale of Goods Act 1979 and the Distance Selling Regulations 2000.

The main points to remember are:

- The seller must provide clear and accurate information about the goods or services they are selling.
- The seller must provide written confirmation of the sale.
- Goods must arrive within 30 days, unless otherwise agreed.
- You have a “cooling off” period of seven days – which starts the day after you receive your goods – during which you can cancel your order.
- If an item is faulty or broken when it arrives, you have the right to a repair, replacement or full refund. The seller should pay the cost of returning the item.
- If you buy a second-hand product from a business you are still legally protected – they must ensure that goods meet legal safety standards and are correctly labelled. But because of wear and tear the law does not hold the trader to the same standard of quality as those selling a new product. Private sellers online, however, can refuse responsibility for the quality of their goods.



Know your rights

Buying from companies outside the UK

If you buy an electrical product from a company based inside the EU, European Law will protect you but it may take time to sort out your complaint. Contact the UK European Consumer Centre at ukecc.net for more details, or contact Citizens Advice.

If you buy from a company outside the EU and have a problem, it is unlikely that UK or EU law can protect you.

Also, bear in mind that:

- Electrical goods may not meet EU safety and quality standards.
- The product you receive may work on a different voltage rating from that in the UK.
- As well as delivery charges, you will have to pay Customs and Excise duties before the goods are delivered to your home.
- If you need to return a product, you will probably have to pay the postage. You will also need to complete a Customs and Excise form to get a refund on duty taxes.

One in 16 online companies which have a UK domain name (.co.uk) are not based in the UK.

More help and useful contacts

Your rights and the law

Citizens Advice

Helpline: 08454 04 05 06
adviceguide.org.uk

Trading Standards

You can find your local Trading Standards service by contacting your local council or visiting tradingstandards.gov.uk

Online shopping using EU websites

UK European Consumer Centre

Tel 08456 04 05 03
ukecc.net

Online shopping worldwide

Complaints about overseas internet businesses can be registered on this database, but read carefully how they might use your details
econsumer.gov

Website Checks

You can find a register of all .uk domain names at nominet.org.uk

Internet Shopping is Safe (ISIS)

isisaccreditation.imrg.org

Shop Safe

uk.theshoppingassistant.com

Seller and product reviews

reviewcentre.com
dooyoo.co.uk
ciao.co.uk

Electrical product recall notices

electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/recall