

Talk about Online Shopping – Video

In this lesson, you can learn how to talk about online shopping.

What was the last thing you bought online? What are the best online shopping websites, in your opinion? Have you ever had a really good – or bad – experience when shopping online? You'll learn some useful language to talk about these topics and answer these questions in this lesson.

1. Favourite Clothes Shopping Websites

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Online-shopping-scaled.webp>)

Rich: Hey – nice shirt!

Gina: Thanks!

R: Is it new?

G: Yes, I bought it last week on Asos (<https://www.asos.com/>).

R: I've heard of Asos, but I've never actually ordered anything from there. Would you recommend it?

G: Yes, I think it's great. I use it at least once a month. They have a huge range of clothes and the prices are very reasonable. Some people say their customer service is a nightmare, but I've never had any trouble. Where do you shop for clothes if you don't use Asos?

R: Well, I used to shop at Next, which is a shop I've always liked. Their clothes have always been quite expensive, but over the last year or two the quality has been going downhill. So recently I started shopping at Zara (<https://www.zara.com>). I think the clothes are much better value for money.

G: OK, so you would recommend Zara as a good place to shop?

R: Yes. So far, so good. I only started using their website two months ago, mind you...

Here's a question: do you know which prepositions to use when you talk about online shopping?

When we talk about physical shops, we usually use 'at' – so you can say, for example, 'I bought it at Walmart'.

When we talk about online shops, we usually use 'on' – so you can say 'I bought it on Amazon'. This is because we talk about being **on** a website.

We also say, 'I bought it online' or 'I bought it on the internet'. We often hear students making mistakes with these phrases, so be careful!

Get more practice with prepositions in this Oxford Online English lesson: Prepositions At, On and In (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/prepositions-at-on-in>).

In the dialogue, you heard some vocabulary to talk about online shopping. Look at some phrases you heard.

1. They have a huge range of clothes.
2. The prices are very reasonable.
3. Their customer service is a nightmare.
4. The quality has been going downhill.

What do these phrases mean? Could you explain the meanings in English?

Try it now! Pause the video. Imagine you're an English teacher (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/about-our-online-english-teachers>), and you need to explain what these phrases mean in English. What would you say? Pause the video and say your definitions aloud.

How was it? Could you do it?

'A huge range' means that they have many different products. For clothes, this would mean that they offer many different items, different styles, colours, and so on.

'Reasonable' means 'fair'. If the prices are reasonable, they're not too high. It doesn't mean that the website is cheap, but if you use the word 'reasonable', you probably mean that something is good value for money.

A nightmare is, literally, a bad dream, but you can use it to describe something terrible.

Finally, if something goes downhill, it gets worse. 'The quality has been going downhill' means that the quality of their products has been getting worse and worse.

There are other useful words and phrases in the dialogue. We recommend listening to each dialogue several times and noting down any phrases you think are useful or interesting.

So, you've heard how to talk about shopping websites you use for buying clothes (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/clothes-shopping>).

Look at some questions.

1. What are some of your favourite websites for buying clothes online?
2. How often do you buy clothes online?
3. Are there any websites you would recommend staying away from? Why?

Think about how you could answer these.

When you answer the questions, try to include some details.

For example, when you answer question one, don't just say, 'I like shopping on Amazon'.

Instead, you could say, 'I love buying clothes online. My favourite website is Asos because the prices are very reasonable, and their customer service is excellent.'

You could also say, 'I usually buy clothes online two or three times a month. I would recommend staying away from Frox (<https://froxperkasie.com/>) because the quality of the clothes has gone downhill recently.'

OK? Pause the video and try to answer the questions now.

Could you do it? If not, go back and listen to the dialogue again.

Ready to move on? Let's look at your next topic.

2. Comparing Websites

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/website-design-internet-technology-graphic.webp>)

In this dialogue, you will hear us comparing two websites – Amazon and AliExpress. Have you ever used these websites? If you have, how do they compare? Think about your answers before you listen.

Rich: So, what about things like electrical goods? Which website would you use if you wanted to buy, say, a battery for your mobile phone?

Gina: Until recently I would have said Amazon is better without a doubt, but a while ago a friend of mine introduced me to a website called AliExpress.

R: AliExpress? I've never heard of that. How does it compare to Amazon?

G: I think the main reason people use it is because it's cheaper than Amazon, but I've also found that they often have products that you can't get hold of on other websites.

R: OK, that's interesting. What's their customer service like?

G: Well, it's true that you'll see lots of complaints about it if you read the online reviews – but I've only had to send something back once, and they sent a replacement straight away.

R: Right. Well, that sounds pretty reasonable.

G: Yes, I thought it was fair enough. The only thing I would say about AliExpress is that their delivery times are not the best. You wouldn't want to order something from them if you were in a hurry!

R: Can you see the estimated delivery times when you place the order?

G: Yes, you know what to expect – you just have to be patient! The last thing I bought from AliExpress, which wasn't available on Amazon by the way, was a part for a printer. They said it would take over a month to arrive, but in fact it arrived safe and sound after only a week!

R: So you were a satisfied customer!

How did you get on? Did you agree with our comparison? Let's have a look at some of the language we used.

1. Until recently I would have said Amazon is better _____.
2. AliExpress often has products that you can't _____ on other websites.
3. What _____ their customer service _____?
4. With AliExpress, the delivery times _____.

Look at these sentences. Which words are missing? You heard them in the dialogue – try to remember.

OK? Let's check.

1. Until recently I would have said Amazon is better without a doubt.
2. AliExpress often has products that you can't get hold of on other websites.
3. What is their customer service like?

4. With AliExpress, the delivery times are not the best.

You can use ‘without a doubt’ to emphasise the point you’re making – you could also say ‘definitely’.

‘Get hold of something’ means to find something that you need. If you say ‘Replacement parts are hard to get hold of’, you mean that it’s difficult to find a shop or website which sells them.

If someone asks you, ‘What is their customer service like?’, they are not asking you if you like it or not. ‘What is it like? (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/how-is-or-what-is-like>)’ means ‘tell me about it’ or ‘describe it to me’. If you’re talking about customer service, or shopping, you’re probably asking whether the other person recommends it or not. It’s like asking: ‘Is the customer service good or bad?’ It’s not exactly the same, but it is similar.

Finally, if you say that something is not the best, you’re saying that it’s not so bad, but it could be better.

As before, there is more language in the dialogue which you might find useful! We won’t give you every single word and phrase we use. You should also do your own work to get the most from these dialogues.

Now, let’s see if you can talk about this topic.

1. Which websites do you usually use for buying electronic products? How do they compare?
2. When was the last time you bought an electronic device? How did you decide which website to buy it from? Were you a satisfied customer? Why (not)?

Try to provide a detailed answer, perhaps using some of the vocabulary you saw before.

For the first question, you could say ‘When I need to buy electronic products, I usually use a website called Banggood. They don’t have as many of the top brands as Amazon, but the prices are great, and they often have products that you can’t get hold of anywhere else.’

For the second question, you could say: ‘The last time I bought something on Banggood was about three weeks ago. I couldn’t find the product on any other website, and it arrived safe and sound after only two weeks. I was a very satisfied customer.’

Of course, there are many possible answers! Now it’s your turn. Pause the video and try to answer the questions now.

How did you get on? Were you able to express your ideas?

Next, you’ll see how to talk about good online shopping experiences.

3. Talking About A Good Experience

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Happy-online-shopping-scaled.webp>)

This time, you’ll see some key phrases before you hear the dialogue. What are the missing words? Try to find them as you listen.

1. The website is really _____.
2. That’s always a _____.
3. It’s straightforward to use once you get the _____ of it.
4. They haven’t _____ me down yet.

Pause if you need more time to read. Ready? Here's the dialogue.

Gina: Do you find that there are some websites you use more since you've been living outside the UK?

Rich: Yes – absolutely. One of my favourites is a website called Moonpig where you can buy greetings cards – like birthday cards and Christmas cards – and have them delivered in the UK. British people often send greetings cards to friends and family on their birthdays, or at Christmas, and this can be more difficult to organise if you're living overseas.

G: Right. I guess in some countries birthday cards or Christmas cards are hard to find.

R: Yes, that's true, and even if you can get hold of them, it's hard to gauge how long they will take to arrive in the UK. So, some years ago I got into the habit of ordering cards on Moonpig. The website is really intuitive, so it's easy to find what you need.

G: That's always a plus. It sounds good – how does it work?

R: First you choose your card, then you can personalise it with a photo if you want to – or just write your own message. After that you just confirm the address that you want it sent to.

G: Sounds like a good service. I gave up on trying to send birthday cards; now I just send people text messages, but I've always felt it's a little lazy. It's nice to get a real card in the post, you know?

R: Yep – I'm with you. It's a good service. The cards are posted in the UK, so they only take a day or two to arrive. It's straightforward to use once you get the hang of it, reasonably-priced and they haven't let me down yet!

Could you find the missing words? Let's check.

1. The website is really intuitive.
2. That's always a plus.
3. It's straightforward to use once you get the hang of it.
4. They haven't let me down yet.

Do you know what these mean?

'Intuitive' means easy to understand. If a website is intuitive, you can find what you need and do what you want without difficulties, and without having to think about it too much.

A 'plus' is a conversational way to say 'advantage' or 'benefit'.

If you 'get the hang of something', you learn how to do something – or you learn how to use something. You can say, for example, 'It's easy when you get the hang of it.'

If someone 'lets you down', they disappoint you by not doing what they said they were going to do. If a website is very reliable, you can say, for example 'They never let me down'.

What about you? Are you usually a satisfied customer when you shop online? Tell us about a positive experience.

1. Do you usually have positive or negative experiences when you shop online?
2. Tell us about a positive experience.

Pause the video now and try to make a few sentences.

For example, you could say, 'Most of the time I enjoy shopping online. I often order birthday presents online. Although it's very convenient, it makes me a bit nervous because obviously they need to arrive on the right day. So far, so good. They haven't let me down yet! Last year, I ordered a bunch of flowers for my Mum and I was worried that they might get damaged. I was very pleased when she told me that they had arrived safe and sound – and on the 8th of November!'

Done? Great! Let's look at our last point.

4. Talking About A Bad Experience

Gina: Speaking of being let down, I've just had a really strange experience shopping online.

Rich: Really? What happened?

G: Well, I have an old laptop that I bought overseas a long time ago. Last year, I needed to buy a replacement battery – and I couldn't find one anywhere. No one seemed to stock the exact type I needed.

R: Yes – I think the manufacturers do that on purpose. They just want you to buy a new computer.

G: Right. Well, I persevered and eventually I found a company which had the battery – but they said that it would take two months to deliver it. I didn't have any alternatives, so I went for it.

R: OK, and what happened?

G: Well, first of all the ordering process was really tricky. The website was so clunky – it looked like it was made in the 1990s and hadn't been updated since.

R: I hate it when that happens. It's so annoying!

G: Yup, but I was determined! So then, I spent about six weeks tracking my battery as it made its way around the world. It showed that arrived in the country, but then it disappeared off the radar completely. I contacted the company and they had no idea what had happened, and they sent me a refund.

R: OK, well that's something, at least.

G: I was ready to just call it quits, but then, last week, I received a package from the same website.

R: Don't tell me... Your battery finally arrived?

G: Well, not exactly... The package contained a battery, but it was for a phone, not for a laptop. But, it had my name and address, and so on.

R: That's kind of weird, isn't it? Did they mix up your order with someone else's?

G: Who knows? Anyhow, I gave up on them. It's too much hassle.

Here are some sentences from the dialogue. Can you fill the gaps?

1. No one seemed to _____ the exact type I needed.
2. The website was so _____ – it looked like it was made in the 1990s.
3. I was ready to just call it _____
4. I gave up on them. It's too much _____.

Could you remember? Let's check.

1. No one seemed to stock the exact type I needed.
2. The website was so clunky – it looked like it was made in the 1990s.
3. I was ready to just call it quits.
4. I gave up on them. It's too much hassle.

What do these highlighted words mean? Do you know, or can you guess from the context? Pause and think about it if you need more time.

'Stock' as a verb means to have something for sale. You can use it in the verb phrase 'have something in stock'. If a shop has something in stock, it's available and you can buy it. If something is out of stock, it's not available right now.

'Clunky' means that something is badly designed and difficult to use. If your website is made on a budget, it'll probably be clunky. It's mostly used to talk about technology which is not well-designed or which is out-of-date.

'Call it quits' means that you've been trying to do something for a while, but now you're giving up and you're not going to try any more. After a long, frustrating customer service experience, you might decide to just call it quits and go home!

Finally, 'hassle' is a useful word to talk about bad customer service. Something which is a hassle is both difficult and annoying. If you describe something as a hassle, you're suggesting that it doesn't need to be this difficult. For example, if a website makes you fill out loads of forms to get a refund or cancel your subscription, you can describe that as a hassle – they're making it more difficult than it needs to be.

Now, it's your turn. Have you ever had a bad experience with shopping online? Tell us what happened.

1. What were you trying to buy? What went wrong?
2. What did you do? What happened in the end?
3. Did this experience put you off online shopping? Why (not)?

When you're ready, pause the video and say your answer out loud.

That's it for this lesson. Thanks for watching!

Continue practicing with this next lesson: Shopping for Clothes in English (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/shopping-clothes-english>).