

Menu

POLICY & ACTION FROM CONSUMER REPORTS

Consumer Reports WebWatch Guidelines

Research

[Consumer Reports WebWatch's 'Look Before You Click' Campaign: Detecting and Avoiding Online Auction Fraud](#)

[WebWatch Survey, Conducted by CRNRC in May 2008: Age](#)

[Consumer Reports WebWatch's 'Look Before You Click' Campaign What We Got After Spending More Than \\$1,800](#)

Experts



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Campaigns



Hear Us Now

We empower consumers through education and action about communication and media issues involving telephone, cable, Internet and wireless services and equipment.

Join Us

We believe Web sites will promote Web credibility if they adopt these basic policies:

Identity

- Web sites should clearly disclose the physical location where they are produced, including an address, a telephone number or e-mail address.
- Sites should clearly disclose their ownership, private or public, naming their parent company.
- Sites should clearly disclose their purpose and mission.

Advertising and Sponsorships

- Sites should clearly distinguish advertising from news and information, using labels or other visual means. This includes “in-house” advertising or cross-corporate ad sponsorships. Search engines, shopping tools and portals should clearly disclose paid result-placement advertising, so consumers may distinguish between objective search results and paid ads.
- Sites should clearly disclose relevant business relationships, including sponsored links to other sites. For example: A site that directs a reader to another site to buy a book should clearly disclose any financial relationship between the two sites.
- Sites should identify sponsors. The site’s sponsorship policies should be clearly noted in accompanying text or on an “About Us” or “Site Center” page.

Customer Service

- Sites engaged in consumer transactions should clearly disclose relevant financial relationships with other sites, particularly when these relationships affect the cost to a consumer.
- Sites should clearly disclose all fees charged, including service, transaction and handling fees, and shipping costs. This information should be disclosed before the ordering process begins.
- Sites should clearly state and enforce policies for returning unwanted items or canceling transactions or reservations.

Corrections

- Sites should diligently seek to correct false, misleading or incorrect information.
- Sites should prominently display a page or section of the site where incorrect information is corrected or clarified.
- Sites should strive to mark content with its published date when failing to do so could mislead consumers.
- Sites should clearly state their policy on a consumer’s rights if a purchase is made based on incorrect information on the site.

Privacy

- Site privacy policies should be easy to find and clearly, simply stated.
- Sites should clearly disclose how personal data from site visitors and customers will be used. Personal data includes name, address, phone number and credit card number.
- Sites should disclose whether they use browser-tracking mechanisms such as “cookies,” and other technologies such as Web beacons, bugs and robots.
- Sites should explain how data collected from them will be used.
- Sites should notify customers of changes to privacy policies, and provide an easy opt-out alternative.

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Consumers Union (CU) is an expert, independent, nonprofit organization whose mission is to work for a fair, just and safe marketplace for all consumers and to empower consumers to protect themselves.

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