

## The benefits of online shopping for elderly people

Shopping online has multiple benefits for many seniors, including:

### Helping maintain independence

Some older adults perhaps aren't able to visit shops in person regularly, maybe due to mobility issues, health conditions or because they simply can't get there with the transport available to them. If they have stopped driving, or want access to goods and products that just aren't available locally, being able to order online and have things delivered to their home can make a huge difference to how independently they can live.

Many older people want to do as much for themselves as possible, so online shopping can play a big role in that.

### Accessing better deals to save money

One of the great things about online shopping, especially when on a budget, is that it gives access to lots more retailers, and means that finding a better deal is often possible. Many online retailers offer the same senior discounts that are available in-store, such as senior citizens discounts, and delivery charges (if not already included) are often less than someone would spend driving and parking or getting to a shop in person. These are some reasons why many older people can save money when shopping online.

Take a look at more [money-saving tips for pensioners](#).

## Common risks for elderly online shopping

Unfortunately, shopping online does have risks and there are some common ways in which scammers can try to get either personal details or financial information from those who shop online, as well as taking money from people for a product that they never receive. Some of the most common types of online shopping risk include:

Fake shopping websites, where a website is set up to look like a genuine retailer, but if you buy through it, you usually never receive the goods and also have given personal details and financial info to whoever is behind the fake site.

Counterfeit goods, where a website sells a branded product as genuine, but the customer receives a counterfeit item, which is usually of inferior quality and often has had none of the safety checks that UK law requires.

Fake online marketplace listings, where someone advertises products on online marketplaces, such as eBay, Facebook Marketplace or Gumtree, and takes payments for goods that don't really exist.

## Spotting fake shopping websites

Fake websites can be very cleverly made, either to mimic a well-known retail brand or to simply look like a genuine and trustworthy ecommerce site in its own right. However, there are often some key signs that a website might not be what it initially seems. Spotting these signs or taking these preventative steps can help protect you from giving money and valuable details to scammers.



Look at the domain name of the website that appears in your browser window. If the domain name looks strange then this can often be a sign that the website isn't legit. It may contain numbers or words that you wouldn't expect.

Is there a padlock in the address bar? While the presence of a padlock doesn't necessarily mean that the website is a genuine online retailer, if there

is no padlock, it's usually a strong sign that the website can't be trusted. It means that the information you might give a website is encrypted, so if there is no padlock, your information could potentially be intercepted by someone else.

Did you click a link in an email or a social media advert to get to the website? These types of adverts and links are commonly used by scammers running a recently created website. If you use a search engine to search for the brand name of the website, does the same website come up? If not, it might mean that the one you reached through the link is fake.

Search for website name 'scam' on a search engine. If the website isn't one you have used before, using a search engine to see if there is information on it being a scam is a good idea. Typing the name of the website along with the word 'scam' into a search engine might bring up some results if it is a fake or scam website.

Search for website name 'review' on a search engine. Along similar lines, if a website has lots of bad reviews from people that appear when you search for reviews for that brand, it can be a big warning sign not to shop with them. Reviews are not always genuine, so it's not foolproof, but it can help you decide that it might be safer to shop elsewhere.

Look out for poor grammar, spelling or strangely worded phrases. While the odd typo or mistake on a website doesn't necessarily always mean that it's

fake or run by scammers, it can be a sign that the website was created in a hurry and perhaps isn't a genuine company.

Does the website use poor-quality images? If the product or website images are grainy, pixelated or just don't look professional, it can be a sign that the website has stolen graphics from a genuine retailer.

Prices that are too good to be true. If a website is selling products at a considerably lower price than everyone else, the chances are that it's not genuine. While many trusted retailers do have regular sales and discounts on certain products or lines, a website you're not familiar with that offers huge discounts is often a red flag.

Are there missing contact or company details on the website? In order to sell online in the UK, websites must have details such as the business name, contact details (not just an online contact form) and their registered address. This includes the company's registration number. You can enter this number on a free [government tool](#) to make sure it's the same business name and address details and not just one the website has made up or stolen.

What payment methods do they accept? Many fake or scam websites will only accept digital payment types that are hard to trace or ask you to make a bank transfer. If you pay by these methods and it turns out to be a scam, you usually won't be able to get any money back. However, if you pay with a credit or debit card, there are some protections that may cover you.

Does their website link to the brand's social media accounts? A genuine online retailer is likely to have active social media accounts that have been established for some time, whereas a scam website usually doesn't go to these lengths. It's also worth searching for people who have mentioned the website's name on social media to see if they are complaining about it or telling people that it's a scam site.

If you've ever not sure about whether a website can be trusted, it's a great idea to ask someone you trust for their opinion. If you have younger relatives, friends or neighbours that do a lot of online shopping, they can usually help you determine whether a website seems safe to buy from.



## Tips for local marketplace elderly online shopping

Another type of online shopping that elderly people might like is using local marketplace websites and groups where people in the community list items for sale and the buyer usually goes to pick the goods up in person.

Using a local marketplace like this, such as Facebook Marketplace or Gumtree, can have benefits that include:

- As the item is local, you can usually pick it up in person and don't have to wait for a parcel to be delivered
- Many of the products are second-hand, which is a more sustainable and eco-friendly way to shop
- There are often some good bargains to be had

However, there are also some potential risks to this type of online shopping too, where you find the product online and pick it up in person. Some things to watch out for include:

- The seller asking you to communicate outside of the marketplace platform's own messaging feature, such as asking you to text message them or call or email them.
- The seller asking you to pay for the products in advance or pay a deposit before you pick it up.
- The seller asking you to pay via bank transfer.
- The seller not giving you time to inspect the goods in person before you pay, so you can make sure it's working as it should or is as described.
- The seller asking you for personal information, such as your address.

It can be a good idea to take someone your trust with you if you're going to pick up and pay for something in person which you found on an online marketplace. This might be a family member, friend or neighbour.

## **Additional peace of mind shopping at home and when out and about**

Whether shopping online at home or going out and about, as well as knowing how to minimise the risks of being scammed, it's important to think about safety and what might happen if you have an accident or fall while going about your normal daily activities.