



How To Shop Online Safely This Christmas and Black Friday



It's no surprise that the lead-up to Christmas – including Black Friday – is the busiest time of the year for online shopping. But with so much on your mind at this time of year and your keenness to bag a bargain, it's important to get into some good habits and stay alert when you're buying ... whether it's presents, a short break, next year's holiday or those once-a-year treat.

November and December are the busiest times for fraudsters, and we're sure you don't want to give them an early Christmas present. That's why we've come up with these expert, easy-to-follow safety tips to help protect you from falling victim to seasonal scams.

- Ensure shopping websites are authentic by carefully checking the address is spelled correctly. Type it in rather than clicking on a link in an email, text or post. Fraudsters can set up convincing websites with an appearance and address very similar to the authentic one.
- Make sure payment pages are secure by checking that addresses begin with 'https' ('s' is for secure) and there's a closed padlock in the address bar. But remember, this just means that the page is secure, and not necessarily that the site isn't fraudulent.
- Often, advertisements for items such as gifts, holidays and events on social media and online forums are fraudulent, and items non-existent or not as advertised. Be wary: it's best not to pay any money without seeing the item at first hand.
- Don't pay for anything by transferring money directly to people or companies you don't know, however desperate you are to buy. If it's a fraud, it's doubtful the bank will be able to recover or refund your money. If you can, pay by credit

card.

- When you've finished paying, log out of the page or app. Simply closing it may not log you out automatically.
- Don't buy fake goods intentionally or get duped into buying them, however cheap or 'authentic' they are. They are of inferior quality, can be dangerous, contravene copyright law and affect the livelihoods of workers who make the real thing.
- Avoid 'free' or 'low-cost' trials – whether slimming pills or the latest tech gadgets – without thoroughly reading the small print and trusted reviews. You could be signing up for large monthly direct debits which are difficult to cancel.
- Check that seasonal breaks, holidays or travel that you book online are genuine by researching them thoroughly. Look for independent reviews, and make sure travel agents / tour operators are genuine by checking for an ABTA/ATOL number. Pay by credit card for extra protection.
- If you're buying event, fixture or entry tickets, do so only from official sources such as box offices, sports clubs or reputable fan ticket exchange sites. If you don't, you could be paying for fake or non-existent tickets.
- Avoid clicking on links in unexpected emails, texts or posts, or email attachments. At this time of year, fake parcel firm delivery notifications are commonplace attachments or links: they could lead to fraud or identity theft.

Resources:

Have you signed up to West Sussex's Staying Safe Online E-newsletter? To do so, click here

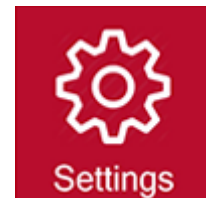
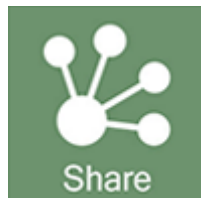
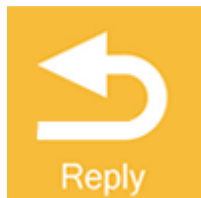
(https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWSCC/subscriber/new?topic_id=UKWSCC_120)

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