

## Where to get further information.

### Citizens Advice consumer service

When you are buying goods from an OMP it is important to check if you are buying from a private seller or a trader; you have different rights depending on who you are buying from. For consumer advice, or to report a seller you are concerned about to Trading Standards, contact 0808 223 1133, Welsh speaking adviser 0808 223 1144.

Relay UK - if you can't hear or speak on the phone, you can type what you want to say: 18001 then 0808 223 1133.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue)

### Office for Product Safety and Standards

provide more product safety information when you are buying products [www.gov.uk/guidance/consumer-product-safety-advice-for-staying-safe](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/consumer-product-safety-advice-for-staying-safe)

[www.gov.uk/government/news/government-issues-online-sales-product-safety-message](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-issues-online-sales-product-safety-message)

### The British Toy and Hobby Association

provide more detailed information on purchasing toys safely  
<https://toysafety.co.uk>

## Citizens Advice helps people find a way forward.

We provide free, confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems. We are a voice for our clients and consumers on the issues that matter to them.

We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment.

We're here for everyone.

Produced by Citizens Advice Financial Capability and Consumer Education team in partnership with the British Toy and Hobby Association.



Published November 2021

Citizens Advice is an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. Registered charity number 279057.

# Top tips for buying safe products from online marketplaces



**citizens  
advice**

## What is an online marketplace?

Online marketplaces (OMPs) are an additional option to businesses own websites, these are platforms online that allow people or businesses to sell items. The seller does not own or control the digital platform through which the goods on offer are being advertised or sold. It can also mean the platform does not have responsibility for the items being sold.

### Product safety

It's important to know that currently there is no legal requirement for online marketplaces to check the safety of products third party sellers post up on selling platforms. Therefore, it is essential that consumers know how to buy products that are safe and know how to report unsafe items.

When we are looking for a certain item it can be very tempting to go for cheaper options, however sometimes this can be a red flag that something might not be genuine. Take time to look into whether the item is genuine and establish who the seller is before you make the purchase.

There are many legitimate small and large businesses that sell their products via OMPs whose products comply with UK safety regulations. However, there are also individual sellers and scammers that can also use these platforms.

## Safety checks you can make

It can be confusing for consumers to identify who is a trader, who is a private seller and whether the OMP has any responsibilities to the consumer. However there are some checks that we can do to try to reduce the risk of buying unsafe or illegal items.

### Checks you can make

Check the item conforms to UK and EU regulations. Certain products, such as toys, electrical and gas items sold in the UK must have markings to demonstrate they have met UK safety standards. Until 1 January 2023, products sold in Great Britain may display:

- CE marking, or
- UKCA marking, or
- UKCA marking and CE marking, or
- UKNI marking and CE marking

What type of selling platform is it? Find out if it allows other businesses or private sellers to use it.

What countries can use the platform?

Use secure payment methods, be wary of sellers that try to change contact details or payment arrangements.

## Toy safety

Check if the item is a toy – there are many items that can look like toys or are advertised as toys but are not suitable for children.

Check the age suitability for your child and the product you are considering buying – do the pictures of the child in the picture match the age warnings on the product?

Know who owns the brand of toy or game and look for that name when searching an online marketplace, as well as on the packaging when you receive it.

When the item arrives, check it over before you give it to a child. Check for faults, detachable small parts, access to stuffing and loose or accessible batteries or magnets.

### Useful resources

Use available browser extensions that will flag potentially unsafe items or those not being sold by official manufacturers or retailers.

For electrical safety checks  
<https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/check-it-out/>

For illegal or fake items checks  
<https://vitalworks.com/checker>