10 Tips for Safe Shopping Online on
BLACK FRIDAY

Once a transatlantic novelty, Black Friday is now a pre-Christmas fixture in the British calendar. This year, of course, we won't be physically going into shops: the whole thing will unfold online. But it'll still be a colossal event, with millions of consumers hoping to find incredible purchases at implausible prices. With the clock ticking on all reductions and buyers bursting to bag the bargains before the mayhem concludes, it's also a time when the over-eager internet shopper can forget caution and become vulnerable to online risks.

Here's National Online Safety's top ten tips for safe shopping online this Black Friday weekend ...

1. TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

It's safest to stick with well-known, reputable retailers. If a site doesn't look professional, or has weird pop-up ads, it's best to steer clear – no matter how tempting their prices. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is!
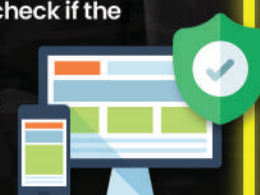
2. WATCH OUT FOR PHISHING ATTACKS

Email inboxes are flooded on Black Friday by retailers telling everyone about their deals. Hackers often try to use the traffic as camouflage – look out for poor grammar, suspicious email addresses and pixelated images – these are all common signs you're being targeted.

3. MAKE SURE THE SITE'S SECURE

When you're buying online, look for a padlock icon near the address bar – or check if the URL includes "https" or "shttp". The extra 's' or the padlock mean you can rest easy: you're sending your card details and personal info via a secure channel.

4. KEEP TO YOUR BUDGET

Before you go online, make a list of what you're looking for – and stick to it. With enticing deals everywhere you look, it's so easy to get immersed in bargain hunting and end up with a massive total spend by the time you log off.

5. LOOK OUT FOR LOOT BOX SALES

Video gaming companies also offer in-game Black Friday deals, with as much as 50% off loot boxes for some titles. Children can also buy reduced-price games through their consoles. So if your child can access the online store or make in-game purchases, it'd be wise to talk to them in advance.

6. READ THE REVIEWS

We've all bought something which sounded amazing online, only for it to be far less impressive when it actually arrived. Take time to read other buyers' views on an item – and think twice about anything that only has a small number of comments about it.

7. CREATE SECURE PASSWORDS

On Black Friday, there's a higher likelihood of you setting up accounts on sites you've never bought from before. Choose a different password for each; the longer, the better. It's best practice to choose a mix of upper and lower case letters, symbols and numbers.

8. CHECK THE SMALL PRINT

Make sure you check out details like a seller's returns policy. It's so easy to shop impulsively on Black Friday and then be stuck with things you don't want because of a very small window for returning goods.

9. IGNORE INFLUENCER PRESSURE

Influencers can be a great for finding out where the best deals are. But don't forget that sometimes they're being paid by retailers, and they can often cause people to feel under pressure to buy something – anything – just because it's Black Friday.

10. CHECK IT'S A REAL "DEAL"

Consumer group Which? found that 85% of Black Friday "bargains" had actually been on sale at that same price (or cheaper) in the previous six months. Look at other retailers or price comparison sites to see if an item really *does* have money off.

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