

Online shopping and parcel delivery rights

Your consumer rights when shopping online, what you are entitled to, and what to do if things go wrong.

Online shoppers in Northern Ireland can often face problems getting parcels delivered or pay higher delivery prices (surcharges) or have free UK delivery withdrawn.

Online retailers must:

- tell you about delivery charges and other terms and conditions at the beginning of the ordering process
- display information about delivery charges and terms clearly
- state who is responsible for the return of items if they are unsuitable

How to protect yourself from parcel delivery related problems

Check delivery terms before you buy

- always check delivery options and costs before starting your order
- delivery restrictions or surcharges must be specified at the beginning of the online shopping process before checkout for example, if the retailer does not deliver to Northern Ireland
- always check delivery policies, and terms and conditions before committing to a purchase to avoid disappointment

Don't assume that all online retailers offer free returns

- You may have to cover the cost of returning items so always check terms and conditions of the website before purchasing.
- If returning your online order and the retailer has requested that you pay for postage, it is important to consider the type of delivery service and cover you require.
- Don't forget responsibility for the item lies with you until the item is delivered to the retailer.

Shop around if you need to pay for returns

- Consider using a price comparison website for parcel deliveries and make sure you get proof of posting.
- This is like a receipt, which shows the date, time and destination address.
- Without this, parcel operator may not pay compensation if your item is lost, damaged or delayed.

Get the item delivered on time

- If you need the item by a certain date, perhaps as a birthday gift, factor in enough time as there may not be a next-day or express delivery option to Northern Ireland.

- Goods ordered online must be delivered within the time frame specified or agreed with the seller.
- If no time frame is agreed, the seller has to deliver 'without undue delay' and at the very latest not more than 30 days from the day after the contract is made or item is purchased.

Think ahead and make sure your item arrives safely and securely

Will you be there when your parcel is being delivered? If not, you should perhaps consider an alternative address e.g. workplace, friend, relative or lockers. Collection options, such as click and collect are becoming increasingly popular with shoppers, so consider if this is a viable alternative for you.

Parcel operators have many different policies when it comes to delivery when no one is home to accept the parcel:

- Some leave the parcel with a neighbour.
- Others will leave an advice card telling you how to arrange redelivery or where to pick the item up.
- Some leave the parcel in a location around your premises which they refer to as a Safeplace.

If you are concerned about the safety of your mail and where it might be left by the parcel operator, leave instructions when placing your order with the online retailer outlining where you would like your order to be left if no one is home to accept delivery. If you prefer the parcel was not placed in certain locations (for example, wheelie bins or on the front doorstep) clearly place a 'No Parcels' sticker.

Always get a proof of posting If you are returning the item

- When using the designated courier or pre-paid postage label organised by the retailer, it is still important to retain a proof of posting to ensure you can prove that the item has been returned.
- If any delivery problems occur after you have returned the item the retailer is responsible for sorting this out with their appointed delivery provider.
- Always include your address on the back of the parcel in case of problems with the return delivery.

What to do if you experience a delivery related problem

My parcel hasn't arrived

What the law says

What can I do?

- The retailer is responsible for goods up until they are delivered. This means, that in the event of non-delivery contact the retailer rather than the delivery company.
- Goods ordered online must be delivered within the time frame agreed with the seller. If no time frame is agreed, the retailer has to deliver 'without undue delay' and at the very latest no more than 30 days from the date of purchase.
- If you paid for delivery and requested the item be delivered by a certain date or time (for example, by Christmas or next-day delivery) and the delivery arrives late, this is a breach of contract. You have the right to cancel your order and get a full refund.
 - You are entitled to cancel your order up to 14 days after the delivery of goods and receive a full refund however some exceptions do apply. The refund can include the full cost of the item plus standard postage, regardless of the delivery option chosen.
- Before you order look at the retailer's terms and conditions in relation to delivery. Do they state they can leave the item in an alternative location such as the doorstep or other location around your address or with a neighbour etc?
- If not, you can argue that the item has not been delivered and the retailer has not fulfilled their terms.
- Check with your neighbours and around your property in case the item has already been delivered.

Goods should be delivered within 30 days unless an alternative time period has been agreed. If this has not occurred, contact the retailer and remind them of their obligations to get the items delivered to you. Insist that they take action to resolve.

My parcel/ item has arrived damaged

What the law says

What can I do?

- The retailer is responsible for goods until they are delivered to you or a nominated person.
- This means, that in the event of damage you must contact the retailer rather than the delivery company.
- The condition of the goods is the retailer's responsibility until the consumer receives the goods.
- If you are at home at the time of delivery, you will normally be asked to sign for the item. This confirms that the item is in a good condition. However, if the item is damaged, signing this cannot waive your rights. When signing, you could record that the goods have not yet been inspected.
- Check goods quickly after receiving them and raise any issues promptly.
- If the item is damaged, retain evidence of the damage. Take photographs of the parcel or box that it was delivered in.
- Lodge a complaint with the retailer as soon as possible.

Making a complaint

Your contract is with the retailer, not the delivery company, so you need to contact the retailer if something has gone wrong.

You should contact the retailer as soon as you can when a problem arises, such as an item arriving damaged, to give them a chance to put things right.

To be in with the best chance of making a successful complaint, you should:

- confirm any discussions in writing to retailer.
- act quickly so that the retailer cannot claim the damage was caused by you.

The retailer must prove that the blame was not theirs within 6 months of you receiving the goods. If goods are damaged you can request them to be repaired or replaced. Any damage to the item it is the responsibility of the retailer.

However, you can also complain directly to the parcel operator especially if you have repeat problems with a certain operator when it delivers parcels to you.

For further information on how to make a complaint against a trader or ask about your consumer rights, contact Consumerline on 0300 123 6262 or visit www.consumerline.org

For advice on your rights regarding parcel delivery restrictions and surcharges, and to report problems with particular retailers, [click here to visit the Delivery Law website](#).

More helpful information

Complaints about postal services

How to make a complaint about lost, delayed, or damaged mail, what you can expect, and how we can help.

Tax and customs charges

Information for sending or receiving goods outside of the EU.

Postal scams

Types of postal scams and what to look out for.

Sending letters and parcels

How to make sure your post and parcels arrive safely, and what you can do if things go wrong.