



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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# **TWELVE WAYS TO BE A SAVVY SEASONAL SHOPPER**

If the thought of tackling Christmas shopping fills you with festive fear rather than seasonal merriment, then the tips that have been launched for this year's **National Consumer Week (21-25 November)** could come just in time to help banish consumer confusion and prevent a 'Noel-nightmare'.

### **12 ways to be a savvy seasonal shopper**

**1. Make a budget and stick to it**

With presents, food, travel and parties - costs soon mount up so managing your money is key. Think about who you are buying for, what other seasonal spends you have, and how much you can afford to spend. If you find that you have too many presents to buy and not enough money – then why not agree with some friends or family not to buy presents and instead plan to do an activity together in 2012.

**2. Your shopping rights: all year round**

Whatever time of year – be it Christmas or summer – the goods you buy must be of satisfactory quality (not faulty) - match the description (if it says it is an all wool jumper, it should be a jumper made of wool) - and be fit for their purpose (if you were buying computer software and asked whether it would work on your particular computer, it should do so). If not, you're entitled to your money back if you're quick. If you aren't quick you could be offered a repair or replacement instead to put things right.

***Super seasonal tip:*** *Some shops really get into the seasonal spirit and give their shoppers something extra – and may even let you change your mind when there is no fault, so ask.*

**3. Check the size before you buy**

If you're buying clothes or shoes or something that is dependent on size, try to find out the person's size beforehand. If you can't do that discreetly and don't want to give the game away by asking ... check if the shop or seller will be happy to swap it if you buy the wrong size by mistake.

*Remember: you don't have a right to just change your mind and nor does the person you gave the gift to.*

**4. Keep the receipt ... in case it needs to be returned**

If there is a problem with the gift and it needs to be returned; the shop will usually want to see the receipt to prove that it was bought at that store. Remember, if you pay by card then a refund usually goes back on that card.

***Super seasonal tip:*** *When you buy a gift for someone, all of the refund and return rights stick with you, but you can ask if they will allow you to transfer your rights along with the gift. If the shop agrees it's useful to have the name of the person you're giving the gift to recorded on their receipt so they can use your rights if it's faulty.*



**5. Armchair shoppers get a seven day cooling off period**

When you buy gifts online, over the phone, through a catalogue or TV shopping channel it is called 'distant selling' because you don't deal with anyone face to face. You haven't been able to check out the product yourself and are relying on a picture or description so you get a seven day cooling off period (from the day after it's delivered), to change your mind and send it back.

***Super seasonal tip:*** *You may need to prove you've used your cancellation rights and sent it back so always email or write to the company to tell them you are returning it and get a postage receipt when you send it back.*



**6. What armchair shoppers can't return**

You can't return things that you've bought online (or by phone or post) that have a short shelf life like flowers or food because they won't be usable by the time they arrive back with the trader. And for CDs and DVDs you can only return them if they haven't been opened - if the security seal is broken or any cellophane has been torn off etc you will not be able to use your seven days distance selling cancellation rights.

***Super seasonal tip:*** *Don't just put items away to wrap up later. Check things carefully as soon as you get them and return them within seven days if you bought it online (or by phone or post) if they're not what you expected.*



**7. Don't get caught out with parking charges**

It's easy to go over your parking time with long Christmas shopping queues. Check the parking notice carefully so you know how long you've got and where you are allowed to park. Allow for Christmas delays – otherwise you might end up with the unwanted gift of a hefty parking charge.

**8. Always check the delivery date**

While we can rely on Santa to deliver gifts on time – the deliveries you're expecting from online, phone or mail orders could take longer than you expect. Make sure you check the delivery times over Christmas.

*Super seasonal tip: If you've placed an order and think it's not going to arrive in time, you can cancel by letter or email. But let them know asap so you don't end up having to send it back and paying the postage to return it.*



**9. Check the cost of credit**

If you are thinking of using credit cards or other credit to pay, or are invited to sign up to a new store card in the shop, check the paperwork for the price of that credit. Ask about the total you'll have to pay in the end and decide if it's worth the extra just to put off payment or get an introductory offer - don't be rushed into an expensive deal because there's a queue.

**10. Watch out for dodgy traders**

What looks like a bargain may not be one if it turns out to be faulty and you can't find the trader after Christmas. Ask yourself: do you know where it came from and do you think you can find the trader again if there's a problem?

*Super seasonal tip: If you're buying online you can make sure the website is secure by looking for the padlock and the https:// on the payment page.*



**11. Shopping in the sales**

Your rights are just the same if you are buying goods in the sale as at any other time. But if there is a notice or a tag on the product that says it is faulty - that's why it's cheap. If you buy it you're accepting that fault.

**12. Buy gifts in the sale for Christmas 2012**

Plan ahead - the sales can be a good time to get next year's Christmas cards, wrapping paper and gifts at less than this year's prices.

***Where to go for more help and advice:***

[www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/t\\_parking\\_fines.pdf](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/t_parking_fines.pdf)

[www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your\\_world/consumer\\_affairs/buying\\_goods\\_your\\_rights.htm](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your_world/consumer_affairs/buying_goods_your_rights.htm)

[www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/c\\_buying\\_over\\_the\\_internet.pdf](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/c_buying_over_the_internet.pdf)

[www.google.co.uk/goodtoknow/](http://www.google.co.uk/goodtoknow/)

For contact details of your nearest CAB and more information on consumer rights and shopping, go to the Citizens Advice website [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

## Notes to Editors

- ◆ The Citizens Advice service comprises a network of local bureaux, all of which are independent charities, and national charity Citizens Advice. Together we help people resolve their money, legal and other problems by providing information and advice and by influencing policymakers. For more information in England and Wales see [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)
- ◆ The advice provided by the Citizens Advice service is free, independent, confidential, and impartial, and available to everyone regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age or nationality. For online advice and information see [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)
- ◆ Citizens Advice Bureaux in England and Wales advised 2.1 million clients on 7.1 million problems from April 2009 to March 2010, an 18% increase on the previous year. For full 2009/2010 service statistics see: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/press\\_20100517](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/press_20100517)
- ◆ Out of 22 national charities, the Citizens Advice service is ranked by the general public as being the most helpful, approachable, professional, informative, effective / cost effective, reputable and accountable. (nfpSynergy's Brand Attributes survey, May 2010).
- ◆ Most Citizens Advice service staff are trained volunteers, working at around 3,300 service outlets across England and Wales.
- ◆ You can get details for your nearest CAB by texting CAB followed by your postcode (making sure that there is a space between the two) to 64446. This will return the address and phone number of your local bureau along with a link to Adviceguide.