

What am I to do?



When you buy clothes and shoes, do you know your rights?

Useful contacts

Competition Authority

14 Parnell Square
Dublin 1
tel (01) 804 5400
email info@tca.ie
www.tca.ie

European Consumer Centre

email info@eccdublin.ie
www.eccdublin.ie

National Consumer Agency

4 Harcourt Road
Dublin 2
1890 432 432
www.consumerconnect.ie

CORRECTION

In the car insurance feature in November's Consumer Choice (see p408) we mistakenly referred to AA Insurance as a single-agency intermediary and tied agent of Hibernian Insurance. AA Insurance is in fact a multi-agency intermediary.

Change of mind

I ordered a coat online but when it arrived, I didn't like it. Can I cancel the order?

When you shop online you have the same rights as when you shop locally and, furthermore, additional protection under the EU regulations on 'distance selling'. Consumers buying online are entitled to cancel their order - without having to give any reason - within seven days after the purchase arrives or, in the case of a service, for a certain time after the contract is concluded.

If you cancel the purchase of your coat, you will most likely be liable for the cost of returning it - unless it is faulty, not of satisfactory quality, different to the one you ordered or a substitute good. You will have to pay for postage in returning the goods, but you should not be liable for the original cost of delivering the goods to you.

Remember that goods sold in an online auction are not covered by any of the Distance Selling Regulations and, therefore, there is no entitlement to a "cooling off" period.

Mystery jeans

I bought a pair of jeans but they don't have any visible labels to tell me what they are made of or how to clean them. Isn't that information required?

Yes, manufacturers are obliged to give you certain information on clothing labels, so that you can make an informed choice about what to buy.

Clothes and other textile products for sale in the EU must be labelled by reference to their fibre content, for example, '100% cotton' or '50% wool, 50% acrylic'.

There is no legal requirement for manufacturers of clothes or footwear to give the country of origin on the label. Care labels, such as washing instructions, are not obligatory either, but if shown they must be accurate. Information provided on a care label could be important if an item of clothing were to become damaged following washing or dry cleaning. You would not have a right to redress against the shop if your machine washed an item that should only be dry cleaned.

If a shop is stocking clothes without the minimum labelling requirements, you should contact the National Consumer Agency (see Useful contacts).

Laundry wash-out

Recently, I brought some clothes to the laundry and was shocked at the price. How can Irish retailers overcharge as they do? Aren't there any price controls?

Generally speaking, Ireland has no price controls. This means that we have no law in Ireland about what the maximum or the minimum price for any product or service should be. Competition between shops and between service providers should enable the consumer to buy at the best possible price, but it is up to you to find those lower prices and the best value products and services.

Consumer law does not regulate price, but aims to ensure that you are provided with enough information to make an informed choice. This is why there are regulations covering the claims made about prices. Retailers have a legal obligation to state truthfully the actual prices, previous prices and recommended prices of their goods and services. In addition, certain shops and services, such as pubs, restaurants, service stations, hairdressers and barbers, have to display their price lists prominently.

So, compare prices before you make a choice. And, if you feel that the prices in a particular sector are being kept deliberately high because it is dominated by just one company (a monopoly) or by a small handful of businesses (a cartel), it may be a case of 'price fixing'. In this instance you can report the matter to the Competition Authority, by sending a complaint.

Report by Alba Portales Casas.