

Report Fraud warns as criminals stole £18.3 million through online shopping fraud last festive season

Online shoppers hunting for Black Friday bargains this festive season are being urged to stay vigilant after Report Fraud received more than 14,000 reports of online shopping fraud during last year's festive period.



Report Fraud data reveals that between 1 November 2025 and 31 January 2026, criminals targeting online shoppers stole £18.3 million, an average of £1,278 per victim who made a report.

Black Friday and Cyber Monday are some of the busiest shopping periods of the year, with many shoppers expected to make purchases online. As part of a campaign launching today (23 November 2026), Report Fraud is urging shoppers to stay alert to fraudsters looking to target bargain-hunters through fake websites, fraudulent adverts and messages during the festive shopping season.

Analysis of reports from last year's festive shopping season identified several common methods used by criminals to target online shoppers. One of the most prevalent involved victims paying for goods that either never arrived or were replaced with substitute items of little or no value.

Fraudsters also created fake seller profiles on social media platforms and online marketplaces to advertise sought-after products at attractive prices, only to disappear after receiving payment.

In other cases, victims received counterfeit goods or products that were significantly different from those advertised, despite being marketed as genuine items.

How to protect yourself from online shopping fraud:

- **Check the shopping website is legitimate:** Research auctions to check they're legitimate, particularly if you've not used it before. Use consumer websites, or reviews from people (or organisations) that you trust.

- **Use a credit card to pay:** Use a credit card for payments (if you have one). Many of these protect online purchases as part of the Consumer Credit Act.

- **Only provide required details at checkout:** When making your payment, only fill in the mandatory details (often marked with an asterisk) such as your address. Unless you think you'll become a regular customer, don't create an account for the store.

- **Keep your accounts secure:** Make sure your shopping, online banking and payment accounts are protected by strong passwords that you don't use for any other account.

- **If you believe you are a victim of fraud, you should tell Report Fraud online at reportfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040. If you live in Scotland, contact Police Scotland on 101.**

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