

## Beware of Black Friday – the truth about shopping scams

Love or loathe it, it's impossible to avoid – Black Friday is coming. As the festive period approaches, it's a bargain hunters' paradise with Black Friday, Cyber Monday and January Sales on the horizon.

Black Friday has soared to popularity in the UK but the culture of queuing overnight to secure the best deal is shifting to online shopping. Yet just because you can secure a deal in your dressing gown doesn't mean you should relax – online shopping is a goldmine for hackers. With Brits expected to spend around £7 billion this Black Friday and Cyber Monday according to Finder, shoppers are especially at risk during these events.

### **So, what are the risks when you're buying goods on Black Friday?**

#### **Phishing**

'Phishing' is when scammers try to trick you into revealing personal details, or to visit fake websites. Fake mobile apps and websites with the same branding are clever ways scammers phish your sensitive data.

Sites such as Amazon and Argos have strong security systems and handle millions of transactions a day, so they are your best bet to keeping safe. If you've never seen a site before, there's probably a reason why. We recommend you check the URL of the website and stick to sites starting with 'https' rather than 'http', as they are secured.

You can check if the checkout process is secured by seeing if there's a padlock symbol by the URL. Using PayPal or Google Checkout is a useful extra layer of protection so if you have them, use them. Anything asking you to confirm bank details via email is likely suspicious so we would advise against it.

Don't do it on your mobile – we know many people find it easier, 48% of online shopping came through a mobile in 2018 according to Picodi.com - but it's not worth the risk. It leaves you much more vulnerable than a desktop or laptop would.

#### **Malware**

On top of phishing, online shopping can lead to malware disruptions that may damage your computer or mobile. Trust your instincts, if it looks unprofessional or has too many pop-ups, it's probably is a dodgy site. Avoid clicking links to the retailers from social media as these are often where the malware is released.

#### **Item not as described**

The cases about fake, faulty or non-existent products being sold are at an all-time high during sales like this. These retailers create a sense of urgency, so you panic purchase items over fears of missing a good deal, but it may not be what you think. Make sure you check the returns policy before the sale, so you know your rights - usually by the Consumer Rights Act you have 30 days for a refund if an item is faulty or damaged.

We all know Black Friday and similar sales offer fantastic bargains – but be realistic. Something worth hundreds of pounds is unlikely to be sold for 10% of that price, it's tempting but more than likely to be fake. If it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

There have been reports of people being overcharged for items, receiving empty boxes and even receiving defective, dangerous electrical goods. Products marketed as being especially for Black Friday are worth avoiding, even if they look similar to the product you originally wanted, even if they're not fake, they're likely substandard.

Using a credit card is a good idea since if you receive a fake product, or the product doesn't turn up, you can go directly to your credit card provider as they are jointly responsible for purchases with goods providers. It is much easier to potentially get your money back with a credit card than a debit card.

Even legitimate retailers can scam you, however, as they may not actually reduce their prices at all so it's worth keeping an eye on current prices to ensure you're getting a genuine deal – Which? found 60% of Black Friday 2016 deals were actually the same price or even cheaper during other periods.

It's easy to be tempted by a bargain – but it may end up costing you more. Paying for replacement items or having your details phished can end up being much more expensive for you. Remedian are experts and can keep your school or business safe all year around.

Protecting yourself during these sales is so important – make sure you're getting safe, genuine products and Black Friday and Cyber Monday can be an ideal way to get a better deal on a whole range of products, including electricals. Don't end up with it costing you much more for having to pay for replacements or having your details phished. Remedian providing outstanding IT support for schools and businesses and can protect you all year around from phishing as well as solving all your IT issues. For more information, [get in touch](#).