

**Your rights
explained**

Buying on the doorstep

Protecting the people you care
about from rogue doorstep traders



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What is doorstep selling?

Doorstep selling is when someone sells you goods or services in your home or on your doorstep. There are legitimate doorstep traders, but there is a risk that the homeowner may feel pressured into buying something they do not want or that is not good value for money from rogue salespeople.

Bogus traders use a range of persuasive tactics to sell to unsuspecting and vulnerable homeowners.

This guide will help you support the people around you who may be potential targets for rogue doorstep traders, by helping them shop more safely with a salesperson at their home, and explaining some of their legal rights.



**Remember:
If it sounds
too good
to be true, it
probably is.**

Who is at risk from rogue traders?

We are all potential targets for rogue doorstep traders, but elderly homeowners are likely to be more susceptible to high pressure selling techniques.

They may feel too embarrassed to admit to having bought from a rogue doorstep trader, so it's important that they realise they are not on their own in finding it hard to resist high pressure selling techniques. Most people feel just like them.

Common sales tactics

Bogus doorstep traders employ a range of sales tactics to persuade people to buy. These are six of the most common high pressure selling techniques which homeowners should look out for:

Sales tactic 1 – You're made to feel grateful

The friendly salesperson turns up on your doorstep with a gift, maybe a plant or chocolates, and it might seem rude not to invite the salesperson in.

Sales tactic 2 – You're made to feel as if you have lots in common

The trader picks up on things you have in your home, such as photos of your family or hobbies, and pretends they are keen on the same things to gain your trust.

Sales tactic 3 – You're made to feel as if there is a great sense of urgency

The salesperson says they've got a special discount for you, may pretend to check with their boss, then say that if you don't order now you'll miss out. You're pushed into making up your mind and signing a contract on the spot without any time to reflect.

Sales tactic 4 – You're made to feel committed to the service – and that you'll lose face if you don't buy

The trader gets you to agree to harmless statements about how a service would make your life easier. By answering 'yes', you are starting to say 'yes' to the sale without realising it, and may feel too embarrassed not to buy when you've implied that you will.

Sales tactic 5 – You're made to feel that you will be just as happy as all the other contented consumers

The salesperson talks of lots of people like you who have bought the product, and you feel reassured that you're getting a good deal.

Sales tactic 6 – You're made to feel as if the service is endorsed by an expert

The trader will emphasise that the service has been thoroughly tested and is approved by a professional association, charity, celebrity or council, so you feel reassured by a credible endorsement.

How to handle sales approaches

Homeowners may not be sure about the goods or service being offered by a doorstep trader, but they also don't want to seem rude by declining the caller.

Support those around you in putting these concerns aside, and instead help them not to feel pressurised into making an on-the-spot decision.

Remind them that it's their doorstep, therefore their decision. Homeowners should not feel under obligation to hand over any money, until they are completely sure of their decision.

Below are some of the reasons they might give for not making an instant purchase, and should have the confidence to say to the caller:

- I do not buy goods or services at the door
- I'd like more time to think about it
- I want to shop around and get other quotes
- I have to discuss it with someone else (for example their partner or son/daughter).

Buy wisely

There are some key dos and don'ts to bear in mind when a doorstep trader calls. Take time to support your friends and family members in remembering the following key actions, so that they will buy more wisely and safely:

- don't sign on-the-spot - consider carefully whether you want the goods or service
- always shop around for the best price
- be wary of special offers or warnings about your home
- don't hand over a cash deposit
- don't agree to a trader starting any work straight away
- talk to someone you trust for a second opinion
- if in doubt, call Consumer Direct on **08454 04 05 06**.

Recognising reputable traders

It can often be difficult to differentiate a legitimate salesperson from a rogue doorstep trader. Here are some indicators to help your friend or family member to recognise a reputable trader:

- they present a valid personal identification and identify who they represent
- they make it clear from the outset if they are selling something
- they provide written information on cooling off periods and cancellation rights
- they do not use pressure to sell goods or services
- they do not expect an on-the-spot decision
- they leave as soon as they are asked to do so.

“The friendly salesperson turns up on your doorstep with a gift, maybe a plant or chocolates, and it might seem rude not to invite them in. Don’t feel pressured. Take time and look out for the indicators of a reputable trader.”

Double check the facts

If someone close to you decides that they do want to make a purchase, it's a good idea to remind them of the checklist of facts they should ideally run through before they put pen to paper:

- do they fully understand the total costs of the transaction including estimates, delivery and installation?
- do they understand their rights if they sign a contract?
- do they know the arrangements for after-sales servicing, such as the guarantees or warranties?

Only once they are satisfied that the transaction is entirely acceptable, should they agree to make a purchase.

Their Rights

If your friend or family member spends more than £35 with a trader in their home or on their doorstep, they usually have seven days to change their mind and cancel and get back any money they have paid. They should be wary of traders who try and get them to agree to begin work before the end of the cooling off period.

Their right to cancel should also be given to them in writing by the trader. If they are not given this information, the trader can't hold them to anything in the contract and they don't have to pay anything.

If they decide to cancel and have not agreed to anything in writing or have not consumed any goods, they should advise the trader in writing within seven days of being told of their right to cancel. They should keep a copy of the letter or email as proof of cancellation.

However, if they agree in writing to work starting or consume goods within the seven day period and then cancel, they may have to pay something. This is the only circumstance in which they can't get all their money back. If the trader has started work early and they didn't agree to it in writing, then they don't have to pay anything if they cancel.

For more information and advice call Consumer Direct on **08454 04 05 06** or visit www.direct.gov.uk/consumer

Get peace of mind

Encourage friends and family members to look out for traders associated with the following organisations for extra reassurance.

OFT Approved Code

Direct sellers can be members of the Direct Selling Association, which works to a code of practice that has been approved by the Office of Fair Trading.



Trade associations

If the trader claims to be a member of a trade association, you can contact the association yourself to check their membership, but look up the number yourself.

TrustMark

TrustMark identifies reliable tradesmen for home improvements and repairs, and is supported by Government, building industry and consumer protection groups.



Local Authority Assured Trader Scheme

Check with your local authority - businesses belonging to this scheme are subject to an independent and impartial application.

Customer care
close to home

