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Buying Furniture Online Can Be Safer than Offline

By Joel Walsh

Furniture sales have historically been a major area of consumer complaints. Luckily, there are a number of reasons why buying furniture online may be safer than offline.

No Fast-Talking Salesmen

Many complaints say the furniture salesperson made promises that were not kept. In reality, furniture salespeople don't always know what they're talking about. The actual fulfillment of furniture orders is often handled by a different department, or even a different company.

Not having salespeople hanging around makes online furniture shopping lower-pressure.

It's All in Writing

By their very nature, online furniture stores have to put a lot of information in writing. The written policies regarding shipping, warranties (if any), and customer service will almost always be easy to access. (Hint: look for links to written policies at the bottom of each web page.) The fact that everything is written down gives the online furniture store much less wiggle room to change the terms of the deal.

Tips:

* Save or print out the web pages that describe the furniture you have ordered and the web pages for important policies and guarantees (which may change after you order), along with any confirmation pages or emails. That way, if you ever have a dispute, you have a firm basis to make your case.

* If the web page describing the product does not have a model name or product number, make sure you get those at checkout or at some other point before paying. Make absolutely sure you are ordering the furniture you want to order. As with an offline furniture store, you will have to pay to return any merchandise you ordered by mistake.

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* If you do speak with a salesperson on the phone, don't undermine the paper trail by accepting promises over the phone. Ask the web address for the written policy, or for a follow-up email outlining any promises made.

Photographic Evidence

Almost as good as online furniture stores' paper trail is their photograph trail. A common consumer furniture complaint against offline stores is that the furniture that was delivered did not look like the model in the showroom. With online furniture stores, you are buying based on a photograph. You can save the picture onto your computer in case the delivered furniture does not meet expectations. If you make sure the model name or number is included on the order form at checkout, you can also double-check what the model looks like by going to the manufacturer's website.

Less Delivery Wiggle Room

Late shipments are another common complaint against offline furniture stores. Furniture frequently arrives as much as one to two months later than salespeople indicated.

Online furniture stores will generally ship directly from the warehouse within a few days to a week of your order. Once again, you can easily check the written shipping policy for more exact information.

Another great thing about online furniture stores is that they are generally using third-party delivery companies. If you get the name of the delivery company while ordering, you may at least be able to check with the delivery company itself in the event of a late order. A third-party delivery company makes it a little more difficult for the store to claim the furniture is in transit when it never shipped.

Credit and Finance: Fewer Traps

According to the website consumeraffairs.com, furniture stores' financing deals are notorious for breaking laws regulating credit and loans. That 0% interest deal might not be as great as you thought if it comes packed with expensive penalty charges. Or you might find that the qualification requirements are too high for most people to get the low rate. Worst, since it's the furniture store that's making you the loan, you've essentially already paid them before taking delivery of the furniture. If you later find out your furniture is going to be delivered unacceptably late, you may have a hard time canceling your order. The situation is no better for cash.

Online furniture stores generally do not offer financing. Instead, they accept credit cards. If a furniture store does not deliver the merchandise as promised and will not resolve your complaint, your credit card issuer may be able to help you in your dispute. In an extreme case where the furniture does not arrive or arrives in bad shape, your credit card provider may be able to force a refund.

Better Business Bureau's Convenient BBBOnline

Many consumers who have complaints with a furniture store turn to the Better Business Bureau. But if the store is not a member of the Better Business Bureau, the Bureau can do little to help. Contrary to

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common belief, the Better Business Bureau is not a government agency and cannot enforce judgments. The Bureau primarily works to resolve disputes between consumers and its member businesses.

With online furniture stores, it's easy to check for Better Business Bureau membership. The store should have the BBBOnline logo displayed prominently on the order page. Click on the logo to be taken to the BBB.org web page for that store. The web page should say that the store is a member in good standing.

With the BBBOnline, the Bureau's ecommerce program, you can dispute a sale without having to go to the local Bureau where the store is headquartered, anywhere in the US.

Of course, if you're too trusting and don't look for written policies, Better Business Bureau membership, or save receipts, you can still be snookered by online furniture stores. But you could also be taken in by offline furniture stores. For a careful shopper, online furniture stores make it much easier to dot all the I's than it would be offline. The experience is straightforward, low-pressure, and mostly in writing.

In short, while you should always be careful, online furniture stores make being careful a lot easier.

About the author: Joel Walsh is a freelance writer. Check out this website for a Better Business Bureau-member seller of discount bedroom furniture:

<http://www.bedroomfurnitureusa.com>

[Publish

this article on your website! Requirement: live link for above URL/web address w/ link text/anchor text: "discount bedroom furniture" OR leave this bracketed message intact.]

Patio Furniture For Your Outdoor Room

By Keith George

Patio furniture refers to furniture for the purpose of utilization in patios. Patio furniture is sometimes referred to as garden furniture. A wide variety of patio furniture of different material, shape, size and color is available in the market today. However two factors differentiate between ordinary furniture and patio furniture namely durability and weather resistance.

Plastic or corrosion treated metal furniture should be used for open patios. Plastic and corrosion treated metal are resistant to inclement weather conditions like sunshine, snow, rain etc. Plastic has advantage cost wise also. Most plastic chairs are stackable.

Rattan or wicker furniture is mainly used in covered patios. They are durable and resistant to inclement weather. When the wicker furniture starts to fade a fresh coat of paint will make it look new.

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Wooden patio furniture is more durable than wicker and should be used for covered patios. Tubular metal patio furniture is also popular but costs more. However they are durable and the chairs are usually cushioned. The tables are provided an umbrella in the centre for providing shade. Tables with glass tops are also quite popular.

Steel or wrought iron patio furniture is the most common and the most expensive. However they give a Victorian look to the garden and are the most durable. They need to be painted regularly to prevent rusting of the furniture.

Hammocks are a must in patio furniture. They are available in a wide variety of color and material. There are two types, rope hammocks and cloth hammocks. Rope hammocks can hold up to 200 kilograms. They need to be purchased with a strong wood stand.

As patio furniture tends to be in the open and seen by many people, it is better to invest in pricey furniture. Patio furniture is available in matching sets. It is better to buy a set at once rather than buying individually for aesthetics and as buying individually may be costlier than buying a set.

When buying patio furniture, it is prudent to do enquiry at multiple places as the prices vary widely for similar kinds of furniture. The internet is a good place for enquiry and purchase. Ensure that the furniture shown on the web page is the one being sold before you pay through your credit card. Maintenance of patio furniture is required as in any other furniture. Occasional painting and wood treatment go a long way in increasing the life of the furniture and keeping them looking like new.

Keith George always writes about valuable news & reviews. A related resource is

<http://your-patio-furniture.info/>

Further information can be found at

<http://the-new-economy.info/>



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