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# I Don't Shop Online Because...

## OVERCOMING ONLINE SHOPPING OBJECTIONS

By Sean P. Egen

**S**till driving to the mall? Fighting the crowds? We know you have your reasons not to shop online. Darn good ones, right...? Or are they? It's just possible your objections to shopping online may not be as well founded as you think.

### 1. IT ISN'T SECURE...

The Big Kahuna of objections. Fortunately, it's not accurate. Most online shopping is highly secure and only getting better. In many ways it's more secure than shopping in person or over the phone. Cell and cordless telephone conversations can be listened in on with scanners, and credit cards and receipts can be stolen in department stores by shoplifters or dishonest store employees. Unscrupulous individuals are a threat to any system—both in physical space and cyberspace alike.

Reputable online retailers take security as seriously as you do—if not more so. After all, they want your business. Most go to great pains to protect your sensitive

information by encrypting it and sending and receiving it over secure lines. Many also take additional measures such as not storing your credit card numbers on their Web server—so they're not accessible to potential intruders. Some companies, like Lands' End ([www.landsend.com](http://www.landsend.com)), actually have "no risk" policies—should there be any fraud, they will compensate you for the \$50 your credit card company doesn't cover.

There should be a *Security* link on the homepage of your favorite online retailer explaining their policies in detail. If there isn't, you may want to reconsider shopping at that site.

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## 2. IT WILL JEOPARDIZE MY PRIVACY...

Online retailers do collect some information on you when you shop with them, but so do most mail-order firms and brick-and-mortar shops. (What do you think your grocery store is doing every time you use your "club" card?) Just how much data is collected depends on the company, but the more reputable ones usually gather only the information required to process your order and track Web site traffic. Many merchants use "cookies," small text files stored on your computer, so they

can recognize you the next time you visit them.

A *Privacy* link explaining policies and procedures can usually be found on the homepage of your favorite online store. Many retailers also provide you with an email address or phone number at which you can contact them to ensure your name isn't included on any mailing lists or provided to third parties. If no privacy information is provided, once again, you may want to consider taking your business elsewhere.

## 3. I'LL INCUR SHIPPING CHARGES...

Yep, you will, but there are still "free shipping" offers. Usually, shipping charges are simply part of the cost of shopping online or by mail-order. Just as gasoline, parking, and home delivery charges are costs of conventional shopping. Fortunately, you usually have some say in how your online purchases are shipped. So if it's not a rush order, save a few bucks by shipping standard ground or parcel post. And there are economies of scale involved. You can usually save on shipping by purchasing more than one item with your order. Check out *eDealfinder.com* ([www.edealfinder.com](http://www.edealfinder.com)) for current shipping deals and other special offers.

Now for the really good news. What you pay in shipping charges may be more than offset in what you save in sales tax, depending on where you live and where the company you're ordering from has business operations. Currently, most e-commerce companies follow the same taxation rules as mail-order firms—they only charge sales tax in states where they have business operations. Which means if you live in Cheyenne and place an online order with Nordstrom ([www.nordstrom.com](http://www.nordstrom.com)), which has no business holdings in Wyoming, you don't pay any sales tax. So, you could save taxes by ordering it online.

## 4. I WANT MORE SELECTION...

One nice thing about shopping online is that the selection is frequently greater than in a physical store. How many bookstores have the space to feature as many titles as *Amazon.com* ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))? And stores that have both physical and online outlets

often offer a greater selection on their Web site, as well as Internet specials not available in the physical store. After all, it's a lot less expensive to post additional items on their site than it is to eat up valuable showroom floor space.

## 5. I CAN'T TOUCH OR TRY THINGS ON FIRST...

But, do you really need to? Obviously not with things like books and CDs. For clothes and items where seeing and feeling them firsthand will give you a better

idea of their quality, go see them or try them on at a local store first. Then search the Internet for the best price, buy it

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online, and save some money. If it's not the kind of item you can physically locate, check the e-merchant's return policy. If they'll take it back, go ahead

and order it. What have you got to lose, except shipping? Some companies will even refund that.



#### 6. THERE'S NO GUARANTEE I'LL BE SATISFIED...

This applies to conventional shopping, as well. How many times have you purchased something that looked great on you in a department store only to be less than thrilled with the item once you got it home? Protect yourself by making

sure you're ordering from a reputable company with a generous guarantee and a liberal return policy. They're out there. The good ones know that returns are part of the business—they're ready, willing, and able to handle your return.

#### 7. RETURNS ARE A HASSLE...

Okay, so repacking an item and shipping it back can be a drag. But so can standing in a 30-person return line in a department store the week after Christmas. Many e-retailers make it easy for you to return items by including prepaid return shipping labels

along with your shipment. So you can just leave it at your door for pickup—and you're only out the shipping charges for the delivery, not the return. Some merchants let you return merchandise bought online to brick-and-mortar branches.

#### 8. I CAN'T BE SURE IT WILL ARRIVE ON TIME...

Most e-merchants quote clear, specific delivery schedules and offer you a choice of delivery methods. Once you are armed with that information, it's a simple matter of ordering with enough lead time to meet your deadlines—so don't procrastinate!

While it's true that buying something in a store gets it in your hands immediately, when you have to ship it out of town, you're still at the mercy of the shipping company. If you buy it online, you can have it shipped directly—no wrapping it or standing in line at the post office.

#### 9. IT'S HARD TO FIND THINGS ONLINE...

Anybody who's ever spent the better part of an hour trying to find something in a large warehouse store appreciates just how easy the Internet makes finding products. Just enter the name of the item you're looking for into the search engine of your choice and you'll

most likely be rewarded with hundreds of places to purchase it. And if you are looking for a rare or hard-to-find item, you can't do better than all-encompassing, comprehensive sites on your *Personal Start Page*, like *eBay Auctions* and *Amazon.com Buy Books*.

#### 10. I ENJOY GETTING OUT OF THE HOUSE TO GO SHOPPING...

This is a tough one to overcome. If you enjoy going to the mall, you enjoy it. But do you also enjoy fighting the crowds? Or searching endlessly for a parking space? What about having annoying cologne reps spray you with "foofy" fragrances

when you walk into a store? Isn't it possible you may equally enjoy browsing online from the comfort of your favorite chair, your stereo on and a beverage in your hand? No lines...No driving...No Muzak. Just imagine the possibilities.

Find out what kind of online shopper you are at [www.earthlink.net/blink/feature/shoppers](http://www.earthlink.net/blink/feature/shoppers).

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