Avoid a Glam Scam

Don’t risk buying counterfeit goods online
Avoiding Counterfeit Goods Online: FAQs

I’ve seen a fake designer handbag that looks as good as the real thing. Why shouldn’t I save a bit of money?

People make a living from selling counterfeit designer goods. When you buy from them, you are funding their lifestyle - why should you buy a fake so that they can afford to buy the real brand? Many counterfeit sales are linked to organised crime, so you could be funding terrorism, trafficking or drug smuggling. The buying and selling of counterfeit goods also damages legitimate businesses and brand holders - the UK economy loses around £3.8 billion in tax revenue each year due to counterfeit sales.

What’s wrong with buying counterfeit makeup?

Counterfeit makeup and cosmetics will not have gone through any health and safety testing. You have no way of knowing what’s in them - many fake cosmetics have been found to contain unsafe or banned chemicals. Side effects of untested cosmetics range from rashes, hair loss and skin allergies to severe allergic reactions.

What about electrical goods?

According to the charity Electrical Safety First, almost all counterfeit electrical goods (such as hair styling products, chargers and games) contain faulty parts. These are liable to overheat or break, risking electric shock or fire.

Although it can be tempting to save money by buying cheap, unbranded electrical goods, counterfeits will not have gone through proper safety testing and pose a serious risk of property damage, injury or even death.
If a deal looks too good to be true, it probably is
Designer products have a high price tag for a reason and fakes will not meet the same high quality or production values.

Don’t take social media adverts at face value
Always check reviews of the company or seller which have been left by other customers. If all of the reviews sound similar, they may be from the same person.

Look closely at the listing and the seller’s website
Websites and listings might look genuine, but when you look closer it is easy to spot a fake. If the images look grainy or cropped and there are lots of spelling and grammar mistakes they are unlikely to be legitimate. The website should have information about your consumer rights, including cancellation rights and their returns policy.

Check the brand’s official website
Big brands usually publish a list of approved sellers on their official website. They will also list websites or sellers which have been blacklisted.
Check whether the product you have seen is actually available on the brand’s official website. Fakes will often come in slightly different sizes to the real product or might be part of gift sets or collections which are not officially available.
Look closely at the packaging

There may be spelling mistakes on fake labels or packaging and logos may be grainy and poor quality. Compare the packaging with an image of the product from the brand’s own website or a trusted retailer.

Make sure you have the seller’s contact details

Always make sure that you have a way to contact the seller in case you need to return the item. Online sellers must provide their real name and address - use a search engine to find out whether the details given actually exist. If the address is just a PO Box, the goods have probably been manufactured abroad and may not have been safety tested.

Don’t risk it

If you’re not sure whether or not a product advertised online is counterfeit, it’s safer not to risk it. If you do decide to go ahead with the purchase, use a credit card rather than a debit card and never pay by direct bank transfer.

Vistalworks are developing an online tool which will indicate whether a product listed online is likely to be fake. The tool is in development and can currently test Ebay listings, although it will expand to include other online marketplaces in the future.

Where to Find Trusted Information:

- Advice Direct Scotland
- The Anti-Counterfeiting Group (ACG)
- Vistalworks
- Electrical Safety First
- The Intellectual Property Office (IPO)

www.tsscot.co.uk