

HOW TO SPOT A SCAM WHEN SHOPPING FOR REFURBISHED PRODUCTS

Buying refurbished items can save you money, but it's important to research before you take the plunge. While many reputable businesses offer quality pre-owned electronics, appliances, and other products for a fraction of their original price, BBB Scam Tracker has received reports of con artists ripping off consumers by promising a great deal on "like-new" devices that they don't plan on delivering.



How the Scam Works

You find a website that sells refurbished items ranging from car parts to cellphones to hair dryers. The site looks legit, and they are selling a high-dollar item you want for a price that fits your budget. You decide to purchase through the website or a payment app like PayPal (a BBB Accredited Business).

Then, a few days after receiving your order confirmation, you wonder why you haven't received a shipping confirmation. You reach out to the company, and they respond with an excuse. They may claim they are understaffed or have had a problem with their supply chain. Still, they assure you the item will be shipped soon.

As more time passes, it eventually becomes clear that the seller has no intention of shipping anything. Each time you try to contact them, they either have more excuses or become impossible to reach. One consumer reported, "I was told multiple times the delay was from the owner being in a major car crash or dealing with a catastrophic medical accident. They even told me they were moving shop (more delays) and then that they had moved personally, which slowed delivery." Unfortunately, the item you ordered doesn't exist, and you've lost the money you paid for it.

How to Avoid Refurbished Product Scams

- **Carefully examine a website before making a purchase.** Before doing business with an online retailer, scrutinize their website. Not only should it have quality photos and typo-free content, but it should also have working contact information. In addition, you'll want to research to find customer reviews and complaints. If you find reports of scams or no reviews at all, think twice before making a purchase. Always double-check the URL you are visiting to ensure you aren't on a fake website.
- **Understand what the term "refurbished" means.** Keep in mind that refurbished means different things to different manufacturers. It can mean the product had shipping damage and was returned; it could refer to an open box product, a demo model, or an item that was broken and returned to the manufacturer. Find out what a company means by refurbished before you commit to a purchase. Remember that unauthorized third-party resellers are a considerable risk, especially if they don't offer returns. Even if a reseller claims the manufacturer has refurbished the item, there's no way you can

confirm it. Buying under these circumstances is a big gamble.

- **Ask about return policies.** It can take a while for problems to show up, so make sure you have the option to return a refurbished item. If you can't return it, or the return window is only a week or two, it may not be worth the risk.
- **Inquire about warranties.** Some manufacturer-refurbished items have an extended warranty, but this isn't always true. Find out if the item you're interested in qualifies for a warranty and what the conditions are. Warranties can come in handy if the refurbished item does have issues down the road. Know that anything marked "as-is" won't have a warranty.
- **Buy refurbished products from the manufacturer when possible.** When a manufacturer gets a returned product, they recondition it to be like-new. They use original parts and trained maintenance specialists to get the job done. An item refurbished by a third party may not get the same treatment. It could be repaired by someone who isn't an expert with the brand, or it might contain different parts. Either issue means it won't be in like-new condition when you buy it.
- **Use a safe payment method.** Always make online purchases with your credit card. If an online retailer doesn't deliver on their promises, it will be easier to dispute the charges, and you'll be more likely to get your money back.

https://www.bbb.org/article/scams/28616-scam-alert-how-to-spot-a-scam-when-shopping-for-refurbished-products?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=full%20artilce%20on%20BBB.org&utm_campaign=scam-alert