businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Suggested further reading

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General guidance

First of all, it is worth considering whether you are a business at all. If you only sell a few personal items via a third-party website (such as eBay), you may not be 'in business'. See 'Am I in business?' for more information.

If you are 'in business', that business will need a name, and there are legal requirements relating to this too, which are covered in 'Company and business names'.

You need to ensure that you are trading 'fairly'. This is more than just being nice to your customers; there are detailed legal requirements involved and you could be prosecuted if you do not abide by them. See 'Protection from unfair trading (criminal law)' for more information.

Whatever your business involves, the chances are that you will need to be aware of the requirements for supplying goods and/or services, and perhaps digital content too. There are individual guides on each of these:

- 'Selling and supplying goods'
- 'Supplying services'
- 'Digital content'

There are many other Business Companion guides that may be relevant to your business. Go to the 'Get Started' page and browse the site from there. You will also find a search box at the top of every page.

Selling online

When you sell online, you create what is legally termed a 'distance contract' with consumers. These types of contracts have very strict requirements; more information about them can be found in 'Consumer contracts: distance sales'.

You also need to be careful about the information you give to consumers regarding the cost of delivery. See 'Delivery charges' for more information on this.

Reviews of your business, whether on a dedicated reviews website or your own site, are also something that you need to think about. See 'Reviews and endorsements'.

Other information related to distance selling can be found in Business Companion's 'Distance sales' section.

Product safety

Product safety is incredibly important, whether you are selling online or not.

Certain products, such as toys and cosmetics, have specific regulations controlling their production and sale. You must also ensure that products requiring the CE and/or UKCA mark are labelled correctly.

More information can be found in Business Companion's 'Product safety' section.

It is also suggested that you read 'Providing safe products (PAS 7050, PAS 7100 and PRISM)'.

Underage sales

If you sell age-restricted products online, you must have systems in place to ensure that you only sell to those who are at least the minimum legal age for the product involved. It is much more difficult to check people's ages online than it is in person, and these systems will help you to stay within the law. See 'Online sales of age-restricted products'.

Business Companion's 'Underage sales' section contains guides on the different requirements for individual products.

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