businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Providing price information

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

Where goods are offered for sale to consumers, they must have their price clearly indicated and be inclusive of VAT. This is controlled by the Price Marking Order 2004 (PMO), which applies to goods only, and is limited to sales between traders and consumers. It does not apply to services or to goods supplied in the course of the provision of a service; nor does it apply to sales by auction or sales of works of art or antiques.

However, Part 4, Chapter 1 of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (DMCCA, which controls unfair practices used by traders when dealing with consumers) is broader in scope; it covers 'products', which means more than just goods. There is a requirement under the DMCCA to make sure that pricing information is given clearly if it would be likely to affect the average consumer's transactional decision. Where a trader makes an 'invitation to purchase', they must clearly show the total price, including any extra charges, or explain how the price is calculated.

In essence, sufficient information about the price of products must be given to consumers in order for

them to decide whether to buy. If the price information is not supplied, or is misleading to the extent that the consumer would not have bought the goods or had the service provided if they had known the correct price, the trader commits an offence.

For more information on the DMCCA generally, including an explanation of the legal meaning of 'product', 'misleading action', 'misleading omission', 'transactional decision' and 'invitation to purchase', please see 'Protection from unfair trading (criminal law)'. For the time being, consumers' rights of redress are still covered by the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs); information on these rights can be found in 'Protection from unfair trading (consumers' rights of redress)'.

There are separate regulations called the Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008, which prohibit advertising that misleads traders about the price of goods or services. These Regulations are covered in more detail in 'Business-to-business marketing'.

Alongside this guidance, it is recommended that you read the following, which have been produced by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) and the Government.

- *Guidance for Traders on Pricing Practices* (CTSI). Contains information for traders on good practice regarding general information about prices, price promotions, reference prices, and so on. It applies to goods, services and digital content
- *Unfair Commercial Practices: Price Transparency - Guidance for Businesses on the Price Transparency Provisions of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024* (CMA209) (Competition and Markets Authority). The linked web page includes a shorter summary, alongside the full guidance
- Guidance on the Price Marking Order 2004 (Department for Business and Trade)

Price Marking Order requirements

Where goods are offered for retail sale, the selling price and, where appropriate, the unit price (for example, £6.50 per kg) must be given to consumers in writing (including prices in catalogues, shops and online). Small shops that have a retail area of less than 280 m² do not need to display a unit price.

When selling to the general public, all pricing information must be:

- Clearly legible. Legibility refers to a consumer with normal sight. Traders must also comply with the Equality Act 2010 and take account of those who have particular needs
- Displayed using a font that is clear and of a reasonable size
- Unambiguous
- Easily identifiable
- In sterling
- Inclusive of VAT and any additional taxes (see also 'VAT and other charges' below)

Price indications

Pricing information must be given close to the goods, or in the case of distance contracts (for example, online or mail order sales) and advertisements, close to a picture or written description of the goods. In relation to sales by telephone, price indications must be clearly audible and linked to the subject of the transaction.

Prices can be shown:

- On the goods themselves

- On a ticket or notice near to the goods
- Grouped together with other prices on a list or catalogue in close proximity to the goods. If counter catalogues are used, there must be sufficient copies for consumers to refer to

Pricing information must be positioned so that it is available to consumers without them having to ask for assistance in order to see it.

Goods that are kept out of the consumer's sight are exempt from price marking until an indication is given that they are for sale.

Goods offered at more than one selling price

If a trader wants to sell goods at more than one selling price (for example, where holders of a shop loyalty card can buy the goods at a lower price), the information about the selling price of the goods must set out each selling price (the 'normal' price and the 'loyalty' price) and must indicate if certain conditions have to be satisfied in order to pay a particular price.

Any conditions that have to be met to obtain the lower / loyalty price must be prominently displayed in close proximity to the product. The information must be unambiguous, clearly legible, easily identifiable and available to consumers without the need for them to ask for assistance in order to see it.

Goods in shop windows

Items displayed for sale in a shop window must display pricing information. Exceptions to this are jewellery, precious metal or watches where the individual selling price is more than £3,000. These goods need not bear pricing information in close proximity to the item. However, the pricing information must still be given elsewhere - for example, by means of a price list in-store.

Window displays that do not contain goods which are removed and sold to consumers may be regarded as being purely promotional. They will fall within the definition of 'advertisement' and be exempt. Traders are advised to contact their local Trading Standards service for guidance on this matter.

Foreign currency

If traders indicate that they are willing to accept foreign currency for the purchase of goods, in addition to the required price indications in sterling, they must either:

- Give the price and any required unit price in the foreign currency, together with any commission to be charged
  or
- Clearly give the conversion rate, together with the commission to be charged

The trader must also indicate that the selling price, unit price or conversion rate does not apply to transactions using a payment card for a non-sterling account, which will apply its own conversion rate.

VAT and other charges

All price indications that can be seen by consumers must include VAT and any other compulsory charges or taxes. Postage, packing or delivery charges including any associated taxes that are payable may be shown separately as long as they are unambiguous, easily identifiable and clearly legible.

If the rate or application of VAT or any other tax changes:

- General notices in-store may be used for up to 28 days after the change takes effect, indicating that prices will be adjusted at the till to reflect the change in tax
- Catalogues and sales literature may continue to be distributed, as long as:
    - A label is attached indicating that prices will be adjusted to reflect the change
    - There is sufficient information to allow adjusted prices to be established; or a supplement accompanies the catalogue / sales literature that enables consumers to establish the selling price

By law, you are not allowed to make surcharges for customers using consumer debit / credit cards etc. See 'Payment surcharges' for more information.

Unit-pricing

A unit price must be given when goods are either:

- Sold loose from bulk - for example, fruit and vegetables, meat and fish
  or
- Required to be marked with an indication of quantity or to be made up in a prescribed quantity - for example, wine (contact your local Trading Standards service if you are unsure whether particular products need to be sold by quantity)

A unit price must be given in adverts only where the selling price of goods is indicated.

Until 6 April 2026, certain products were required to use a particular unit price - for example, chocolate had a price per 100 g, whereas herbs and spices had a price per 10 g. Now, all unit pricing is the price per kilogram, litre, metre, square metre or cubic metre, as appropriate. Certain products can be sold by number. A list of fruit and vegetables that can be sold by number can be found in 'Weighing and measuring fruit and vegetables'.

The unit price for goods is the final price, including VAT and all other taxes (but excluding the amount of any deposit) that would have to be paid:

- For a single item of the product, where the product is sold by number
- For one kilogram of the product, where the product can be sold either by weight or by volume, and only its weight is shown
- For one litre of the product, where the product can be sold either by weight or by volume, and only its volume is shown
- In all other cases, for one kilogram, one litre, one metre, one square metre or one cubic metre of the product, as appropriate

For solid foods in a liquid medium (that is, water, brine, vinegar, syrups and fruit or vegetable juice) the unit price must refer to the net drained weight of the food.

Traders can give the imperial equivalent unit price as long as the metric unit price is given greater prominence and the imperial equivalent equates to the metric price.

Where the unit price falls below £1, it must be given to the nearest 0.1p. If it is above £1, it may be given to the nearest 1p or 0.1p.

The following do not require an indication of selling price:

- Advertisements (this exemption does not apply to catalogues or to advertisements that are intended to encourage distance contracts - for example, via the internet or mail order adverts in newspapers)
- Goods sold loose from bulk (these will require unit pricing; selling price refers to the final price payable for a given quantity of goods)

The following do not require an indication of the unit price:

- Advertisements by radio, television, cinema or in a small shop
- Goods that have had the price reduced due to damage or danger of deterioration
- Goods whose unit price would be 0.0p by virtue of the rounding provisions
- Where the item's selling price is equal to its unit price
- Packaged goods sold from a shop with a floor area not exceeding 280 m^2

A unit price also does not have to be provided where an assortment of items are sold as a single package or if a specified number or combination of items are bought together at the same time, where some of the items are sold by weight and some by volume either at different prices or at different weights or volumes when sold separately. Examples would be 'meal deals' and a percentage price reduction for buying any six bottles of wine.

Promotions

Promotional offers must be unit-priced to reflect the single standard item.

Retailers may give additional information if they wish (for example, the 'reduced unit price if purchasing a multi-buy' offer may be shown) as long as it is clear which goods it relates to.

If a trader wishes to sell goods for less than the normal selling price or unit price, and it is not reasonably practicable to mark each product with the reduced selling price or unit price, the trader may use a general notice, or any other visible means, to indicate that the goods are reduced, providing the details of the reduction are prominently displayed, unambiguous, easily identifiable and clearly legible. An example would be if all the stock is reduced by 10% over a Bank Holiday weekend. It would not be reasonably practicable to amend the price of every item for a short period of time. This exemption would not apply where a price reduction operates for a longer period of time and only a small range of products are reduced. In this case amended selling and unit prices would need to be shown for the items concerned.

Precious metals

In the case of goods where the selling price varies from day to day according to the price of the precious metals contained in them, the requirement to indicate the selling price may be complied with by indicating both of the following:

- The weight, type and standard of fineness of each precious metal contained in the product with a clearly legible and prominent notice stating the price per unit of weight for each of these
- Any element of the selling price that is not referable to weight

Goods subject to unit pricing and quantity marking

Any package that carries an E-mark (which indicates that it has been packed following the strict requirements of average-quantity legislation) has to be marked with quantity, in terms of weight or volume, within the requirements of the Weights and Measures Act 1985. See 'Packaged goods: average quantity' for more information.

Most packaged food and drink is required to be marked with quantity.

Non-food products (see below) have different requirements, depending on the product. Detailed information can be found in the Weights and Measures Act 1985 (Schedules 4-7) and in orders and regulations made under that Act.

The following are required to carry quantity marking by net weight, volume or capacity, as appropriate (subject to certain exemptions):

- Construction products (including sand and other ballast, hard-core and aggregates, ready-mixed cement mortar, ready-mixed concrete, and Portland cement)
- Decorating products (including paints, enamels and lacquers, paint solvents, paint strippers and thinners, varnishes and similar products, wood preservative, rust remover, and petrifying fluid)
- Fuel / oil and car products (including liquid fuel, lubricating oil, mixtures of fuel / oil, lubricating grease and anti-freeze)
- Solid-fuel products (coal, coke and solid fuels derived from these)
- Agricultural products (including agricultural liming materials, prepacked fertilisers, inorganic fertilisers, liquid fertilisers, seeds and rolled oats)
- Aerosol dispensers
- Cleaning products (including household soap, detergents, conditioners and rinse aids, bleaches, cleaning and scouring powders, polishes and similar products, and disinfectants)
- Cosmetics (including perfumes, soap, talcum powder, shampoo, toothpaste and deodorants)
- Household pet and bird foods
- Knitting and rug yarns
- Tobacco for pipes and for cigarettes rolled by hand or by use of a device operated only by hand

Various multipacks and many-item packs containing a quantity of the same product are also required to be quantity marked.

The following are required to be marked with number:

- Cheroots, cigarettes and cigars
- Postal stationery (paper or cards for use in correspondence) and envelopes
- Nails (or by weight)

The following have to be marked by length:

- Bias binding, elastic, ribbon, tape and sewing thread

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law, please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

Updated to cover the amendments made to the Price Marking Order on 6 April 2026.

Last reviewed / updated: April 2026

Key legislation

- Weights and Measures Act 1985
- Price Marking Order 2004
- Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008
- Equality Act 2010
- Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024:
    - Part 4, Chapter 1
- Price Marking (Amendment) Order 2024
- Price Marking (Amendment) Order 2025

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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