

Don't toy with children's safety

Guidance from the BTHA on buying toys from online platforms;

- Do some research before you purchase. Search for the company/brand that makes the toy or character you want to buy and then include the company name when you search the online marketplace.
- Exercise caution when buying from third party-sellers on online marketplaces. All the toys which were non-compliant with the Toy Safety Directive in our study came from third party sellers. They are often not held accountable for the safety of the products they sell in the same way as UK brands and bricks-and-mortar / direct online retailers and shops. (Third-party sellers are the sellers behind the main branded website). Do not assume that the platform has conducted any tests or checks on these lines.
- Look at reviews and be aware of who you are really buying from;
 - Some reviews are false and generated by computers. Check all reviews particularly the not so good ones that may be more likely to be genuine.
 - Do they have a track record of selling toys? – if not, be cautious.
 - Do they have good reviews for the toys they have sold in the past? – if not, be cautious.
 - Do they have a UK/EU address listed on the site? – if not, you should question your purchase; you may have difficulty contacting anybody if you have problems and having a UK/EU address is currently a legal requirement to sell toys in the UK. If the seller doesn't know this, what else didn't they know when making the toy you are about to buy?
 - Do the pictures of the child in the marketing match the age warnings on the product?
- Be careful of going for the lowest price – if something looks too good to be true, it probably is. The price could be lower due to a number of factors;
 - Counterfeit product - not made to the same standards as the original and will be illegal for sale in the UK and may also have the issues below.
 - Cheaper material and design that is less durable or unsafe, e.g. high levels of restricted chemicals.
 - Correct legal testing and assessments of products is very expensive and means genuinely safe products can cost more to manufacture.
- Buy from BTHA members (<https://www.btha.co.uk/about-us/#members>). Members sign up to an annual code of practice including commitments on toy safety and toys may carry the Lion Mark symbol to denote they are members. In our study no genuine member product failed any of our safety testing. A number of counterfeit products were identified and our members have reported those to the platforms for removal.
- To spot a counterfeit, look out for a product that is cheaper than normal, know who owns the brand and look for their name on the packaging, look for phrases like “compatible with (brand name)”, these are often made to look like the original but will not be genuine.
- Once you have made your purchase, immediately check your confirmation receipt. Check the source of the product is who you thought you had bought from. If you have bought from a third-party it will be listed on this receipt.
- When you receive your purchase, and importantly, before you give it to your child –
 - Check it has an EU address.
 - Check it has a CE mark.
 - Check the age labelling is appropriate for the age of the child that it is for, as we found in our study small parts that could be a choking hazard for young children that were incorrectly labelled as safe for under 3 years.
 - Check it has relevant warnings (e.g. toys not for babies should state “not suitable for under 3's (or the equivalent symbol).
 - Packaging generally – does it look genuine, is the print correct, are warnings and labels in the correct language, etc?
 - Many illegal toys we purchased were delivered without any packaging or information at all which means there is no address to contact and no warnings that may be critical for safe play.

If any of these cause doubt or are missing, it is more likely that the toy is at risk of being illegal or unsafe, we would recommend you return it.

- When you give the toy to your child make sure you watch them open it and the toy inside is as expected, look out for small parts that were not meant to be there, that there is no access to stuffing materials, that batteries are not supplied loose in the product, that battery compartments are secure when using small batteries or button cells and be careful with small accessible magnets which can be swallowed.
- Some products we purchased were listed as toys but were actually for adults (collectible toys or ornaments) these items do not have to comply with toy standards, be careful and make sure the toy is appropriate for your child.
- Supervise your child during the initial play. Many of the illegal toys we found broke very quickly releasing dangerous small parts or gel contents.
- If you think the toy you have bought is unsafe or illegal write a review to warn other purchasers and talk to your local Trading Standards