

Get your clicks

Want to know which online shops provide the best service and prices? Read the results of our latest survey

More than 16 million people – that's a third of UK adults – now shop online. It's a market that's growing fast, as high-street shops improve their online offers and canny consumers seek out keener prices on the internet.

To help you know where to shop, the results of our latest online retailers survey will tell you which stores our members think are the best. In our survey, websites that were considered easy to use generally scored well on customer satisfaction – even if their prices weren't considered the most competitive.

Top trumps

We found that Amazon.co.uk was the most widely used website for buying electricals, books, CDs, DVDs and games, and many shoppers turn to it as a first port of call. As one shopper told us: 'I usually check out Amazon when contemplating buying something.' But popularity doesn't guarantee happy customers.

Amazon.co.uk and Marksandspencer.com – which was most popular for clothes – failed to top the charts for customer satisfaction.

Websites that offer a more expert service did best in our survey for satisfaction – such as books specialist Abebooks.co.uk, online lingerie shop Figleaves.com, entertainment specialist Play.com and Johnlewis.com. As one customer put it: 'Quite simply, if I want to buy something and John Lewis sells it, I buy it from there.'

Use our tables opposite and on p14 to find out which online shops we recommend (the full results are on www.which.co.uk/onlineretailers). If you simply want the best prices, www.which.co.uk/shopping compares prices from a range of stores.

However, while online shopping is popular, it has its problems, particularly when it comes to receiving goods. So check out 'Which should you choose?', p15, to find out which stores came out best for delivery. We also have security tips in our 'Checklist', p15.



A WAITING GAME

Amanda Woods 39, *secretary*

When buying online, there's always a risk that you'll end up waiting around for deliveries – as Amanda found out after buying a laptop from Dell for her son's Christmas present.

Amanda waited at home all day for the Dell Inspiron to be delivered, but it didn't arrive on the specified date. After she contacted the courier company, delivery was promised for the following day. She waited, but still no laptop. Eventually, Amanda received the computer, checked it worked and wrapped it up.

The laptop broke down a few days after Christmas. Amanda arranged with Dell for it to be repaired, which meant it had to be collected. Again, she waited all day and no one arrived. Fed up, Amanda contacted Dell and asked for a refund.

Dell collected her laptop, and when Amanda didn't receive her refund after a month, she gave Dell a call. 'It advised that it was unable to trace the laptop and therefore was unable to refund my money,' Amanda told us. She contacted the courier company and traced the laptop herself. 'What had taken me 15 minutes had taken Dell over a month, and it was still making enquiries,' she said.

We got in touch with Dell, which, in turn, promptly contacted Amanda to sort out this fiasco. A Dell spokesman said: 'Unfortunately there was a mix-up in the delivery and collection of the laptop – of which we take full responsibility. We apologised to Mrs Woods and have provided a replacement laptop and upgraded the warranty, free of charge, as a goodwill gesture.'

Electricals

Online or in store, John Lewis is your favourite for electricals

Those who bought electricals online love JohnLewis.com as much as those who use its stores (see *Which?*, February 2008, p34) – its website was top for shopper satisfaction.

JohnLewis.com is highly rated for ease of use, and its site also impressed members with its easy ordering and returns processes. 'Its service is excellent, as are its products,' said one of many happy shoppers.

Amazon.co.uk is only just behind on satisfaction and is the most used website – almost half of all shoppers who have bought electricals online have used it. According to our panel members, the site offers a better range of goods than John Lewis and better prices. One shopper told us:

'I would recommend Amazon.co.uk if you were looking for one online retailer to satisfy most of

your technical needs.'

Matching Amazon.co.uk's overall score is 7dayshop.com. It fails to distinguish itself on service but impresses on price, offering what one shopper says is 'extremely good value for money'. Also scoring well are Hughesdirect.co.uk and electronics store Ebuyer.com.

Not on target

PC World's website and Pixmania are the worst performers in the electronics section of our survey. PC World receives the lowest ratings in every single category. But its website still fares better than its high-street shops, which scored just 41 per cent in our last retailer satisfaction survey (see *Which?*, February 2008, p34). Our panel members rate Pixmania's ordering and delivery processes most harshly, although there are complaints about every aspect of its service covered by our survey, including availability.



ELECTRICALS

	OVERALL SATISFACTION (%)
JOHNLEWIS.COM (239)	84
AMAZON.CO.UK (756)	83
7DAYSHOP.COM (67)	83
HUGHESDIRECT.CO.UK (75)	81
EBUYER.COM (96)	80
AMAZON.COM/JP/CA (32)	78
APPLE.COM (59)	75
DABS.COM (112)	74
TESCO.COM (87)	74
MAPLIN.CO.UK (63)	73
SAINSBURYS.CO.UK (35)	72
ARGOS.CO.UK (133)	68
EMPIREDIRECT.CO.UK (30)	68
COMET.CO.UK (73)	65
CURRYS.CO.UK (82)	64
PCWORLD.CO.UK (39)	59
PIXMANIA.CO.UK/COM (55)	56

Sample size in brackets. Full results on www.which.co.uk

Clothes

Price isn't a priority when you shop online for your Sunday best

Topping the chart for clothing is lingerie specialist Figueaves.com. It scores very highly on the range it offers and the user-friendliness of its website, as well as its ordering and delivery procedures. And its number one rating is in spite of scoring poorly on price, showing that good value isn't the most important factor for shoppers in this category.

'The website's excellent and the administration and returns system second to none,' said one shopper. Figueaves.com also has a virtual fitting room to

help you choose the right size and style – a real advantage when you can't try things on.

Mandmdirect.com, which sells branded clothing, is also popular, but it's fallen from its pole position in our last survey (*Which?*, November 2006, p16). Its high score comes from good service and value – it comes out on top for prices.

JohnLewis.com is just behind and wins the best marks for availability, while Landsend.co.uk also gets plaudits, especially for its delivery process.

Marksandspencer.com

is the most popular for buying clothes – almost a third of those surveyed used it. But it's

rated pretty badly on price and there are concerns about how easy the site is to use. However, with JohnLewis.com and Landsend.co.uk, it does the best for returns.

At the rear is designer clothing outlet Redoute.co.uk. It's rated particularly badly on delivery. 'I've waited three weeks and more for delivery,' says one unhappy shopper. 'And when returning goods, I've found the courier service to be inconsistent.'



CLOTHES

	OVERALL SATISFACTION (%)
FIGLEAVES.COM (67)	82
MANDMDIRECT.COM (36)	80
JOHNLEWIS.COM (87)	79
LANDSEND.CO.UK/COM (178)	78
BODEN.CO.UK (116)	75
MARKSANDSPENCER.COM (425)	74
NEXT.CO.UK (159)	72
COTTONTRADERS.CO.UK (247)	69
DEBENHAMS.COM (46)	67
REDOUTE.CO.UK (46)	57

Sample size in brackets. Full results on www.which.co.uk



AMAZON ADDICT

Anne-Marie Ringler 58, *counsellor*

Whether she's treating herself to clothes and CDs or investing in more expensive items, Anne-Marie told us that she prefers to give the high street a miss in favour of shopping online. Last year she managed to do practically all of her Christmas shopping from the warmth and comfort of her own home.

Anne-Marie has arthritis in her legs and dislikes crowds. Using our www.which.co.uk website to get product advice and price comparison sites to net a bargain is far more appealing than 'spending all day trudging from shop

to shop', Anne-Marie says.

She also finds the selection of clothes on the high street 'very limited', but can always get what she wants in her size online. With books and CDs being cheap and easy to find at her favourite site, Amazon.co.uk, Anne-Marie's become a self-confessed addict.

If Anne-Marie does have to buy something on the high street, where possible she checks its availability and reserves it online first. 'I really don't want to go in the shop until I know what's there,' Anne-Marie says.

Entertainment

Specialist services mark out the best sites for books, CDs, DVDs and games

Most of our shoppers – around eight in ten – have used the internet to buy books, CDs, DVDs or video games in the past six months. And their top online shops are Abebooks.co.uk and Play.com, both registering an impressive 89 per cent satisfaction score.

Abebooks.co.uk – which allows users to search for and buy books from independent sellers – stands out for ease of finding products. 'This is an amazing site which links up to thousands of booksellers,' says an Abebooks enthusiast.

'You have access to all these booksellers and usually find even the most obscure out-of-print book.' The site includes innovations such as 'Booksleuth', which helps you to identify a forgotten title: simply post a description on the site of what you can remember, and other users come up with the right book.

Play.com is another winner, coming out on top for ordering and delivery, and impressing on all fronts. One shopper

comments: 'For me, Play.com is the benchmark for online shopping. Understandable, safe, competitive and accurate.'

Big on choice

Amazon.co.uk is by far the most popular website – as it was in our last online retailer survey (see *Which?*, November 2006, p16) – and four out of five shoppers use it. It also scores well on satisfaction: its 87 per cent rating is down to good results in all categories, especially the choice of items it offers. Many shoppers told us that they 'still find Amazon the best for its range of books, CDs and DVDs'.

Could do better

At the bottom of the table, Tesco.com and WHSmith.co.uk get 68 per cent and 65 per cent satisfaction scores.

Tesco's range scores badly and WHSmith.co.uk receives below-average ratings across the board – its prices are particularly unpopular.



ENTERTAINMENT	
	OVERALL SATISFACTION (%)
ABEBOOKS.CO.UK/.COM (89)	89
PLAY.COM (416)	89
AMAZON.CO.UK (2,812)	87
AMAZON.COM/.JP/.CA (120)	84
THEBOOKPEOPLE.CO.UK (102)	83
HMV.CO.UK (146)	75
WATERSTONES.COM (64)	74
CD-WOW.COM (151)	73
BBCSHOP.COM (39)	71
TESCO.COM (113)	68
WHSMITH.CO.UK (45)	65

Sample size in brackets. Full results on www.which.co.uk



Which should you choose?

Best for price

In our entertainment category, bookseller Thebookpeople.co.uk offers best value, followed by Play.com. For electricals, 7dayshop.com wins out, and for clothes it's got to be Mandmdirect.com.

Best for delivery

Play.com is highly rated for books, CDs and DVDs. For efficient delivery of clothes, go to Landsend.com, Mandmdirect.com, Fingleaves.com and Johnlewis.com – which also does well on electricals.

Easiest to use

Johnlewis.com heads the field for easy-to-buy electricals, and is also ahead of the rest for user-friendliness when finding clothes online. Amazon.co.uk does well for buying books, CDs, DVDs and games.

Goods in stock

Each of our category winners for satisfaction also has great ratings for availability, so well done to Fingleaves.com, Johnlewis.com, Abebooks.co.uk and Play.com. Amazon.co.uk and Apple.com also do well.

ACCESS ALL AREAS

We asked a leading disability charity to tell us which of our top-rated websites were the most accessible

We asked AbilityNet, a national charity that helps disabled adults and children use computers and the internet, to cast its expert eye over our top ten online stores to see what provision they made for their disabled customers, particularly those with sight impairments or learning difficulties. Each site was given a star rating out of five for its accessibility; with five being exceptional and one being poor.

Johnlewis.com was commended for its use of large, clear text, and all its features make it easy to use for those with impaired vision or mobility, or with a learning disability. 'John Lewis scored four out of five, which in our view is very good,' says Joe Chidzik, Usability and Accessibility Consultant at AbilityNet.

Some of the websites, however, didn't score so well – the way a website is designed can create



potential problems for disabled users. These problems include the use of image-based buttons, which for users with impaired vision can be difficult to see properly. Similarly, text is difficult to read if it's too small and not resizable. Ensuring that a website can be fully explored by using only the keyboard (rather than the mouse) is also important – for some, a mouse can be difficult to manage. And a clear and comprehensive site map is important, allowing users to see at a glance the overall structure of the site as well as find specific information.

OUR RESEARCH

In September and October 2007, we asked 5,710 Which? online panel members about the websites they used for online shopping. We also asked them to rate how satisfied

they were with these websites and how likely they would be to recommend them. Based on their answers, we compiled a list of the top online retailers in each of our categories.

Checklist

Our guide will help you know your online rights

■ **Extra rights** Along with your usual consumer rights regarding faulty or poorly described goods, you have extra protection when you buy online. You have a cooling-off period of seven working days, starting from the day after you receive your order, during which you can change your mind and cancel an order without having to give a reason.

■ **No return** There are some items you can't return: for example, CDs or software if you've broken the seal on the packaging, and perishable or personalised goods.



And with some services, you give up your cancellation rights if you agree online that the service will start immediately.

■ Who pays postage?

The website should say who pays for returning goods – if it doesn't, the seller pays. So always



read a website's terms and conditions.

■ **Pay by plastic** If you use your credit card to spend between £100 and

£30,000, you are protected by the Consumer Credit Act. So if there's a problem, you can claim from either the trader or your credit card provider.



■ **Be safe** Before you enter payment details online, check that the webpage's address starts with https, not http. This means the webpage is secure and your details are protected.

■ **Where to shop** Start with the stores that did well in this report. Various websites – including www.internetshoppingis safe.co.uk, www.safebuy.org and www.shopsafe.co.uk – recommend traders they consider safe. www.safebuy.org.uk has applied to be accredited by the Office of Fair Trading, and has so far passed the first stage of a two-stage process.

■ **Easy access** If you need help with making it easier to see your screen and use your keyboard and mouse, follow the tips on AbilityNet's website (www.abilitynet.org.uk/myway).

■ **More advice** Go to www.which.co.uk/onlineguides to download our free guide to online shopping.