

BBB: How to Buy Furniture Online!

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The online home furniture industry revenue has grown to **\$15.4 billion in the past five years**. This increase likely reflects the home improvements many homeowners are making, parents shopping for desks for home school learning, and employees who have permanently switched to a work-from-home situation.

Convenience aside, making large purchases online should always be approached with care. The following tips will help you select quality furniture at a reasonable price and avoid a few common **online shopping** pitfalls.

Tips for purchasing furniture online!

Only shop with reputable retailers. Research a retailer's page before deciding to do business with them. Reputable sellers provide information about their company and always have valid contact information. Look for company reviews online; for example, on BBB.org, shoppers can find out if an online retailer is BBB Accredited, read consumer complaints and reviews.

Understand the store's return and refund policy. Return shipping for heavy items, such as furniture, can get costly. Some retailers may have unique restrictions for delivery and returns because of the coronavirus pandemic. Before placing an order, read carefully or call the retailer directly to find out upfront if a retailer has a return policy, if refunds are available, how refunds are issued, what the return process is, who pays for return shipping, and whether or not a restocking fee is charged. This information will often help decide whether or not you will complete the order.

Get to know the delivery options. Typically, furniture retailers offer three kinds of shipping, and each one may have a different cost.

- Front door delivery: the packaged product will be shipped to your front door and no further.
- Inside delivery: the delivery person will take the packaged furniture into your home, sometimes into the room of your choice.
- White glove delivery: the delivery person will take the packaged box to the room of your choice, unbox it and assemble it if necessary. They will also clean up any mess from the packaging and take it with them.

Measure your space: Will it fit through the door? Be extra conscientious when measuring the space where the new furniture will go. A small mistake when taking measurements can mean the difference between the new sofa fitting comfortably in the living room or not fitting through the doorway and down the hall! Make sure to measure doorways, ceiling heights, and any hallway space (including banisters) the furniture must get through to reach its final destination.

Choose the color carefully. As they appear on a computer screen, furniture colors can be significantly different from how they look in real life. Look at furniture images on different devices to get a better feel for the color. Consumer reviews can be helpful, too, as many people will comment if the furniture is darker or lighter than it appears online.

Read several reviews. When finding the ideal piece of furniture, read as many consumer reviews as possible, keeping a critical eye out for comments about the quality of the furniture and the experience with the retailer. Use these for reference before making a final purchasing decision.

Ask questions right up until making a purchasing decision. Reputable furniture companies will happily answer any questions about a specific product until the button to purchase it is clicked. When in doubt, contact the company directly. For example, maybe it's essential to know whether the feet of a couch unscrew so it will fit through a tight doorway. Many companies are also willing to send fabric swatches for a reasonable fee – a good idea if there is a specific color or texture preference to match in the room.

Do a price comparison. Some pieces of furniture are available from multiple retailers, so always compare prices before getting the best deal. Don't forget to factor in shipping fees and taxes when comparing prices.

For store financing, rent-to-own, and layaway plans, carefully read the fine print. Since furniture can get expensive, many retailers offer store financing, layaway plans, and rent-to-own options. If you are considering one option, carefully read the financing plan. How much interest is charged? financing, layaway plans, and rent-to-own options. If you are considering one option, carefully read the financing plan. How much interest is charged?

How long does the payment plan last? How many payments over how many months or years will it last? Is there an fee to pay the balance in full? Get the answers to all of these questions before signing a finance agreement.

Inspect furniture upon delivery. Before signing any delivery paperwork, inspect the furniture. If it is damaged or missing pieces, you don't have to accept it. When a delivery is refused because of damage, you will no longer be responsible for payment.

Learn more about safe online shopping by reading the [BBB Tip: Smart Shopping Online](#) tip at [BBB.org](#). Also read the [FTC's advice on renting to own](#) at [FTC.gov](#).

Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia, and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus (IABBB). The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: [1-800-763-4222](tel:1-800-763-4222), Web site: BBB.org or E-mail: info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org.