



# Buying on the doorstep

Protect yourself and the people you  
care about from rogue doorstep  
traders





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# What is doorstep trading?

Doorstep selling is when someone sells you goods or services in your home or on your doorstep. There are legitimate doorstep traders, but there is a risk that the resident may feel pressured into buying goods or agreeing to work that:

- They do not want
- They do not need
- Is not good value for money
- Is of poor quality

Rogue doorstep traders use a range of persuasive tactics to sell to unsuspecting and vulnerable residents.

This guide will help you support yourself and the people around you who may be potential targets for rogue doorstep traders. It contains advice on how to shop more safely with a trader in your home, and explains some of your legal rights.



# Who is at risk from rogue traders?

We are all potential targets for rogue doorstep traders, but elderly homeowners are likely to be more prone to high pressure selling techniques.

Those that live alone are often targeted because they may feel they have no one else to discuss possible work with before having it carried out.

Citizens Advice Scotland have highlighted that those who are recently bereaved may struggle to deal with issues that would normally have been taken care of by their partner.

Victims may feel too embarrassed to admit to having bought from a rogue doorstep trader, so it's important to realise victims are not on their own in finding it hard to resist high pressure selling techniques. Most people feel just like them.

# Common Sales Tactics

Rogue doorstep traders employ a range of sales tactics to persuade people to buy. These are six of the most common high pressure selling techniques which homeowners should look out for:

## **Sales tactic 1 – You're made to feel grateful**

The friendly salesperson turns up on your doorstep with a gift, maybe a plant or chocolates, and it might seem rude not to invite the salesperson in.

## **Sales tactic 2 – You're made to feel as if you have lots in common**

The trader picks up on things you have in your home, such as photos of your family or hobbies, and pretends they are keen on the same things to gain your trust.

## **Sales tactic 3 – You're made to feel as if there is a great sense of urgency**

The salesperson says they've got a special discount for you, may pretend to check with their boss, then say that if you don't order now you'll miss out. You're pushed into making up your mind and signing a contract on the spot without any time to reflect.

**Sales tactic 4 – You're made to feel committed to the service – and that you'll lose face if you don't buy**

The trader gets you to agree to harmless statements about how a service would make your life easier. By answering 'yes', you are starting to say 'yes' to the sale without realising it, and may feel too embarrassed not to buy when you've implied that you will.

**Sales tactic 5 – You're made to feel that you will be just as happy as all the other contented consumers**

The salesperson talks of lots of people like you who have bought the product, and you feel reassured that you're getting a good deal.

**Sales tactic 6 – You're made to feel as if the service is endorsed by an expert**

The trader will emphasise that the service has been thoroughly tested and is approved by a professional association, charity, celebrity or council, so you feel reassured by a credible endorsement.

# How to handle sales approaches

It's **your** doorstep, therefore it is **your** decision and you shouldn't feel under any obligation to hand over any money until you are completely sure of your decision.

Below are some of the reasons you might give for not making an instant purchase. You should have the confidence to say to the caller:

1. I do not buy goods or services at the door
2. I'd like more time to think about it
3. I want to shop around and get other quotes
4. I have to discuss it with someone else (for example a partner or son or daughter)
5. This is not a convenient time. Please contact me by letter to arrange another appointment



# Buy wisely

There are some key **DO's** and **DON'T's** to bear in mind when a doorstep trader calls. Take time to familiarise yourself and support your friends and family members in remembering the following key actions, so that you will buy more wisely and safely:

**DON'T** sign on-the-spot – Consider carefully whether you want the goods or service

**ALWAYS** shop around

**BE WARY** of special offers or warnings about your home

**DON'T** hand over a cash deposit

**DON'T** agree to a trader starting work right away

**TALK** to someone you trust for a second opinion

**IF IN DOUBT** call Highland Council Trading Standards on **01463 644570** or Police Scotland on the non-emergency number **101**.

For general advice call Citizens Advice Scotland on **03454 04 05 06**

**FEEL THREATENED?** Call 999

# Recognising reputable traders

It can often be difficult to tell apart a legitimate salesperson from a rogue doorstep trader. Here are some indicators to help you to recognise a reputable trader:

- they present a valid personal identification and identify who they represent (You are advised to check this with the company they claim to represent).
- they make it clear from the outset if they are selling something
- they provide written information on the contract and any cooling off periods and cancellation rights
- they do not use pressure to sell goods or services
- they do not expect an on-the-spot decision
- they leave as soon as they are asked to do so.

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**The friendly salesperson says they've got a special discount for you. You're pushed into making up your mind and signing a contract on the spot without any time to reflect. Don't feel pressured. Take time and look out for the signs of a**

**reputable trader**

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# Double check the facts

If you or someone close to you decides that they do want to make a purchase, it's a good idea to remember the checklist of facts you should ideally run through before you put pen to paper:

- do you fully understand the total costs of the transaction including estimates, delivery and installation?
- do you understand your rights if you sign a contract?
- do you know the arrangements for after-sales servicing, such as the guarantees or warranties?
- do you know who you have contracted with and have all the information you need to contact the trader should something go wrong

Only once you are satisfied that the transaction is entirely acceptable, should you agree to make a purchase

# Your Rights

If you spend **more than £42** with a trader in your home or on your doorstep, you should be given written information including:

- the trader's name, geographical address and phone number,
- what has been agreed, and
- written details of your right to cancel, where you have 14 days to change your mind, cancel and get back any money you have paid.

Be wary of traders who try and get you to agree to work starting before the end of this cooling off period.

If you are not given the information on your right to cancel or it isn't provided clearly or in the correct way, the trader can't hold you to anything in the contract and you don't have to pay anything.

If you decide to cancel, you should advise the trader in writing **within 14 days** of being told of your right to cancel. Keep a copy of the cancellation notice, letter or email as proof of cancellation.

# Find a reputable trader

## Trade Associations

Trade associations often give added protection to consumers by auditing their members, having a code of conduct and dealing with complaints. If a trader claims to be a member of a trade association, you can contact the association to check their membership, but look up the number yourself to ensure you are contacting the genuine organisation.

## TrustMark

TrustMark identifies reliable tradesman for home improvements and repairs, and is supported by government, building industry and consumer protection groups.

To search for local traders visit the TrustMark website below.



## **Highland Handyperson Service**

If you are aged 65 or over and struggle to carry out small jobs around your home, or if you are any age and suffer from a disability then you may be entitled to use the Highland Handyperson Service.

The service will ensure small jobs are carried out by a vetted handyperson and you will only be charged for the agreed materials used.

Visit the Highland Council website

[www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) to find your local handyperson

Highland Council Trading Standards

Call **01463 644570**

[trading.standards@highland.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@highland.gov.uk)

[www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk)



Police Scotland

Call **101** to contact your local Police. If you feel threatened call **999**

[www.scotland.police.uk](http://www.scotland.police.uk)



Citizen's Advice Consumer Service

Call **03454 04 05 06**

[www.adviceguide.org.uk/scotland](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/scotland)

