

Advertising in Online Marketplaces

Advice and best practice

The **UK advertising rules** apply to commercial listings from sellers acting as a business on any online marketplace. Private individuals who are selling one-off or ad-hoc second-hand items that, for instance, they no longer need (such as the majority of sellers on sites such as Vinted and Depop) aren't subject to the advertising rules.

If you are a 'business seller' you should ensure that all the claims you make about your product or service (including images) are not misleading, harmful, offensive, or irresponsible.

This factsheet applies to all business sellers advertising products or services on third-party online marketplaces, such as eBay, Etsy, Amazon and Temu.

Tell the truth...

When creating listings, you must hold **evidence** for any objective factual claims. While you can use '**puffery**' in your ads (such as claiming to have 'the comfiest chair in the world'), factual statements about desirable characteristics (like 'foldable' or 'non-slip') and general descriptions (such as colour, size, condition, and materials) require substantiation.

Additionally, ensure that any images accurately depict the product and do not mislead consumers e.g. regarding appearance, size, function, or effect. Avoid using images that might cause confusion about what the consumer will actually receive — for example, showing other items not included but that might reasonably be assumed could be.

Lastly, be transparent about product **availability**; if stock is limited or an item is no longer available, make that clear and don't advertise it as being currently in stock.

... the whole truth

Sellers must include all material information in their listings – that's any information the buyer needs to make an informed decision about whether to buy a product or service, and which is likely to have a **material impact** on that decision e.g. information that might have made them choose not to purchase if they had known.

Qualifications or 'small print,' whether in the product listing or an image, can be used to clarify information but must not contradict the claims being qualified or the overall impression given by the ad.

Additionally, if sellers can set their own **delivery fees** on the platform, any charges should be clearly stated – and specify if the charge applies per order or per item. Claims such as "free delivery" should be accurate, and if you can't offer delivery to some locations, you need to make this clear upfront and avoid claims which imply that you can deliver to areas you can't.

Compare fairly

If making **comparative claims** in an ad, you must hold evidence, and you may need to provide a signpost to where additional information about that comparison can be found, so that competitors and consumers alike can **verify** it. Examples of comparisons include "*the most effective oven cleaner on the market*," "*the best weedkiller available*," and "*The UK's No 1 alarm clock*".

State accurate prices

Price statements must be accurate, match the product or service advertised and, where the price of one product depends on another, must make clear the extent of the commitment to obtain the advertised price (i.e. "£5 a shirt, 2 for £8"). Additionally, if using a "from" price in a listing that contains various options, the price should not materially mislead – e.g., by including a much cheaper, loosely related product to make the headline products appear cheaper.

If you are selling something and comparing your price to the **Recommended Retail Price (RRP)**, you should hold evidence that the RRP is genuine. Don't just rely on the manufacturer's say so, and avoid using an RRP if you are the only seller of the product.

If you decide to use promotional prices on your products, like a sale, XX% off, or a voucher code, this is **promotional marketing** and you should include all **significant conditions** relating to the offer in the ad itself, such as a closing date, any geographical restrictions or product restrictions, minimum spend, etc.

Adopt a responsible approach

While not materially misleading consumers is a priority, ads on online marketplaces should also not cause harm, **offend**, or be **socially irresponsible**. Think about what you're advertising and how you're doing it and be mindful of doing so responsibly.

As well as the general guidance above, there are also specific rules for various different types of products and services, from **alcohol**, **beauty products**, and **CBD** to **weapons** - and on specific types of content, such as **environmental claims**.

Where can I get more help?

Sign up to **CAP's Insight newsletter** to get advice direct to your inbox.

Watch **CAP Bitesize Series 2** - a short, easy to digest video series on pricing and savings claims in ads.

See our **advice for small businesses** for more guidance.