**What is online shopping?** Online shopping is a form of electronic commerce which allows consumers to directly buy goods or services from a seller over the Internet using a web browser. Consumers find a product of interest by visiting the website of the retailer directly or by searching among alternative vendors using a shopping search engine, which displays the same product's availability and pricing at different e-retailers.

As of 2016, customers can shop online using a range of different computers and devices, including desktop computers, laptops, tablet computers and smartphones. An online shop evokes the physical analogy of buying products or services at a regular "bricks-and-mortar" retailer or shopping centre; the process is called business-to-consumer (B2C) online shopping.

When an online store is set up to enable businesses to buy from another business; the process is called business-to-business (B2B) online shopping. Online customers must have access to the Internet and a valid method of payment to complete a transaction, such as a credit card, an Interact-enabled debit card, or a service such as PayPal or Stripe (a software platform for Internet business developed by Irish brothers John and Patrick Collison).

**Browsing online shops:**

* There is such a variety of online shops and sites that it can be overwhelming and a number have become popular go to sites for many users including: Amazon, eBay and Etsy. Irish popular sites include: [www.argos.ie](http://www.argos.ie); [www.dunnesstores.ie](http://www.dunnesstores.ie); [www.superquinn.ie](http://www.superquinn.ie); [www.supervalu.ie](http://www.supervalu.ie); [www.easons.ie](http://www.easons.ie) and [www.donedeal.ie](http://www.donedeal.ie). Check out one of the sites in the class and talk through the different features of the site including: exploring the homepage; click on different tabs; using filters to refine your search; use of back browser button to go back to home page; if you know what you’re looking for use the search box on the homepage.

**Purchasing an item online:**

* As in real shops first you need to find the item you wish to purchase; add it to your shopping basket or cart; go to the checkout; give delivery details and make payment. Let’s shop for an item in <http://www.marksandspencer.ie/>. Go through all the processes as outlined by your tutor. When you reach the point of confirming payment – Don’t do it as you don’t want to purchase today!

**Top tips to ensure online shopping safety:**

* Is the site genuine? Does the site display a postal address and phone number? Do they have a returns policy? Make sure the site is using the **https** rather than http when you reach the payment page as this indicates they’re using security when handling your money. Using the back-browser button will clear any of your personal information on the site.

**To avoid any misunderstandings after placing an order online, it is advisable that you have full details of:**

* The seller's name and address (physical address not email/web address); ordering procedures and delivery schedule; method of payment and the relevant currency; full cost of the item or items including postage and packaging.
* Any other charges that may apply - VAT should be included or at least indicated on goods and services within the EU. (Where the goods originate outside of the EU, VAT and customs duty will be levied at point of entry).
* Read the seller's terms and conditions carefully to make sure you know what your rights and obligations are under the contract and what the cancellation terms and complaints procedure are in case you are not satisfied with the goods.
* Find out how your personal details are likely to be used. You should be able to refuse further communication from the company or from a third party. The seller's Privacy Policy may tell you; make sure that when you give your personal details, including payment details, that the site is secure. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission provide tips on making a secure payment online.
* You should receive a confirmation email when you order the goods online. If you do not have email, ask for a receipt when paying online. It's a good idea to print the confirmation page when the order is placed.
* Check your credit card statement carefully to ensure you have been billed correctly. Inform your bank or credit card company immediately if there is a discrepancy. The credit card company may contact the seller to clarify the situation.

***The Citizens Information website may answer many concerns you have about online shopping:*** [***http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/consumer\_affairs/consumer\_protection/consumer\_rights/distance\_selling.html***](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/consumer_affairs/consumer_protection/consumer_rights/distance_selling.html)