

**NRC 2007**

**SHOPPERS ! BEWARE – transcript**

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Everybody can be tempted by the huge discounts we can get in the sales .  
But are these discounts real or are we being fooled ?

We asked some shoppers their opinion .

**Tony Northcott said:**

They are trying to get you through the door. They are banking that once you're in the shop you will spend, even when it's not on items that are discounted.

**Tom from London added :**

In 2005 the Department of Trade and Industry tightened the laws surrounding sales. Do you know why ? Stores were advertising huge discounts when items had never actually been available for the non-sale price! So an item could appear in a sale for £50 after a 50% discount when in fact it had never been on sale for the marked 'full price' of £100, clever strategy ! don't you think ?

**July from Manchester also warned us :**

The code governing sales now insists that an item must have been on sale for the marked full price for at least 28 days in the six months prior to the sale. This rule is also designed to stop 'never-ending' sales. Before the law was changed an investigation by the consumer group Which? accused furniture store MFI of having items nearly always on sale. The watchdog's magazine said: 'Shockingly, four out of the five kitchens we looked at were on 'sale' throughout the entire six months.' Shops can get round the new rules if they put up a notice, which may not be very obvious, that the item may not have been available at the pre-sale price for the full 28 days. If you see one of these, the offer is almost certainly not as good as it seems.

Another tactic is to advertise 'special purchases'. Stores order in merchandise at the last minute just for the sales - often of dubious quality but with big discounts. Signs or labels should identify goods as 'special purchase' but stores rarely if ever explain what this means. This practice is legal, but shoppers should be aware that these items are not necessarily genuine bargains.

Shops are entitled to change their refund policy during the sales. It may be that a shop that normally allows customers to bring back goods if they are unwanted or do not fit, in exchange for a refund may change this policy during the sales.

But shoppers still have rights. If an item is faulty, damaged or in any other way not fit-for-purpose, the customer is legally entitled to a refund.

Shops know what makes shopper's tick and have years of practice at making buyers part with their money. But ultimately it is the customer that holds the purse strings. A simple tip when braving the sales is to work out what the price of an item would be without a discount and consider if you would pay the full price. If not, then it might be you are falling for the retailer's tricks.