

Check this template against your local regulations and your own policies before you use it.

SOP no.		Version		Effective date	
Owner		Approver		Review date	

Purpose

To handle every return and refund the same way, within the store's returns policy and the customer's legal rights, so customers are treated fairly and stock and money are accounted for.

Scope

All returns, refunds, exchanges and store credit for orders placed online, through the store or a marketplace. It applies to customer service, fulfillment staff and the owner or manager.

Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Customer service	Handles return requests, checks eligibility, issues return labels, and keeps the customer updated until the return is closed.
Fulfillment	Receives and inspects returned items, records their condition, and restocks or sets aside each item.
Owner or manager	Approves exceptions and refunds above the agreed limit, keeps the returns policy current, and reviews return reasons each month.

Definitions

Returns window: The number of days after delivery in which a customer can ask to return an item under the store's policy.

Faulty item: An item that is damaged, defective or not as described. Customers usually have legal rights for faulty items beyond the store's own returns policy.

What you need

- The current returns policy, published on the store
- Access to the store admin, help desk and shipping app
- A labeled area for returned items waiting for inspection

Procedure

1. Receive the request

Log every return request in the help desk with the order number, items, reason and photos if the item is faulty. Reply within the time your service standard sets.

2. Check eligibility

Check the request against the returns policy, such as the returns window, the item's condition and any items that can't be returned. Faulty items are handled under the customer's legal rights, whatever the policy says.

Caution: Never refuse a refund for a faulty item because it's outside the store's returns window without checking with the manager. Consumer law may still apply.

3. Issue the return

Send the return instructions and a label or address, and tell the customer how and when they'll get their refund, exchange or credit.

4. Receive and inspect

When the parcel arrives, match it to the return request, inspect each item and record its condition.

- Photograph damaged or used items before they go anywhere
- Flag anything that doesn't match the request to customer service the same day

5. Refund, exchange or credit

Process the refund to the original payment method, ship the exchange or issue store credit, as agreed. Refunds above the agreed limit need the manager's approval.

6. Restock or write off

Put items that can be resold back into stock and update stock levels. Set aside faulty items for a supplier claim, repair or disposal, and record why.

7. Close the return

Tell the customer the return is complete, close the ticket, and record the return reason.

Records

- Each return request, the decision and the reason, in the help desk.
- Inspection notes and photos for returned items.
- Refunds, exchanges and store credit issued, and who approved exceptions.
- A monthly summary of return reasons by product.

Related documents

- Returns policy
- Complaint handling procedure
- Order fulfillment checklist

Revision history

Version	Date	What changed	Approved by