

# THE BEST AND WORST ONLINE SHOPS



A new survey of more than 14,000 Which? members reveals the top-rated websites for online shopping satisfaction

LizEarle.com is the top-scoring online shop, with JohnLewis.com a close second, according to our 2011 online shops survey – the largest of its kind in the UK. We've gathered opinions from 14,671 Which? members, making this our biggest ever online shopping survey.

And those members who have shopped at LizEarle.com – purveyors of skincare products and a variety of other toiletries and cosmetics – have kept the site in the top spot for the second year running, with a customer score of 92%.

Liz Earle's website was described by one member as 'lovely and easy to use', while another described its online business as 'the best I have ever used, with knowledgeable and obliging staff and quick delivery.'

Regular readers of our online shops survey will not be surprised to see John Lewis achieving

another high score. 'I have a long-standing relationship with John Lewis and it never disappoints' said one member, reflecting on its consistently strong performance in our surveys over the years. Plenty of members acknowledged that they find John Lewis isn't always the cheapest place to shop online, but it was rated highly in most other respects. At the bottom of the league overall – for the second year running – is B&Q.

## PRICE MATTERS MOST

You told us that the main reason why you shop online is that it's cheaper and easier to compare prices. Price is the most important factor when choosing which website to buy from – 32% of members said this was their top priority, coming just ahead of the site's security, which scored 29%.

Your biggest bugbear with online shopping is paying a high price, or having to pay at all, for postage and packing – 41% of members found this irritating. Other common turn-offs include not being able to choose a specific or suitable delivery time, which was mentioned by 38% of members, and not being able to touch the goods before you buy them (32%).

The good news is that members experienced few problems when shopping online – 83% said they hadn't had a problem. Among those that did, delayed delivery (17%), receiving a faulty item (15%) and poor availability of items (14%) were the most common.

## TOP OF THE SHOPS

This year we've changed the categories in our survey so they are more in line with our high street shopping survey (June 2011, p58).

John Lewis is among the top-rated sites in all five categories it appears in. Amazon is featured in all eight categories, and is among the top-rated in five of them.

ILLUSTRATION BY: LEE HASLER

## TOP 75 ONLINE SHOPS RATED BY THEIR CUSTOMERS

	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)		CUSTOMER SCORE (%)		
1	LIZEARLE.COM (55)	92	39	ASOS.COM (65)	71
2	JOHNLEWIS.COM (1,038)	89	=	SAINSBURYS.CO.UK (73)	71
3	AMAZON.CO.UK (4,112)	87	=	AVONSHOP.CO.UK (49)	71
4	ABEBOOKS.CO.UK (317)	86	=	DELL.CO.UK (169)	71
=	LAKELAND.CO.UK (246)	86	43	WATERSTONES.COM (123)	70
6	KIDDICARE.COM (40)	83	=	MAPLIN.CO.UK (243)	70
=	RICHERSOUNDS.COM (42)	83	=	COTTONTRADERS.CO.UK (551)	70
8	EVANSCYCLES.COM (39)	82	=	FATFACE.COM (42)	70
=	7DAYSHOP.COM (253)	82	=	CDWOW.COM (59)	70
=	CHAINREACTIONCYCLES.COM (46)	82	48	MANDMDIRECT.COM (35)	69
11	SCREWFIX.COM (304)	81	=	SPORTSDIRECT.COM (77)	69
=	APPLE.COM (316)	81	50	NEXT.CO.UK (119)	67
=	WIGGLE.CO.UK (63)	81	=	ARGOS.CO.UK (606)	67
14	FIGLEAVES.COM (145)	80	=	GAME.CO.UK (80)	67
=	THEBOOKPEOPLE.CO.UK (144)	80	=	WICKES.CO.UK (62)	67
=	THEBODYSHOP.CO.UK (43)	80	=	ELC.CO.UK (40)	67
17	CHEAPSMELLS.COM (100)	79	55	TESCO.COM (377)	66
=	HUGHSDIRECT.CO.UK (54)	79	=	COTSWOLDOUTDOOR.COM (48)	66
=	PLAY.COM (391)	79	=	CHEMISTDIRECT.CO.UK (57)	66
=	CLARKS.CO.UK (145)	79	58	PIXMANIA.CO.UK (89)	65
21	LOOKFANTASTIC.COM (55)	78	=	WHSMITH.CO.UK (60)	65
=	BOOKDEPOSITORY.CO.UK (186)	78	=	DEBENHAMS.COM (108)	65
23	QVCO.UK (91)	77	=	DIXONS.CO.UK (61)	65
24	MARKSANDSPENCER.COM (756)	76	62	ASDA.COM (53)	63
25	EBUYER.COM (260)	75	=	COMET.CO.UK (227)	63
=	HARRODHORTICULTURAL.COM (103)	75	64	HP.COM (HEWLETT PACKARD) (70)	62
=	FRAGRANCEDIRECT.CO.UK (63)	75	65	SUTTONS.CO.UK (76)	61
28	LANDSEND.CO.UK (327)	74	=	BHS.CO.UK (42)	61
=	HOUSEOFFRASER.CO.UK (65)	74	=	MOTHERCARE.COM (39)	61
=	BBCSHOP.COM (114)	74	=	GARDENINGDIRECT.CO.UK (232)	61
31	ESPARES.CO.UK (138)	73	69	ZAVVI.COM (37)	60
=	BODEN.CO.UK (185)	73	=	IKEA.COM (77)	60
=	HMV.COM (116)	73	71	CURRYS.CO.UK (127)	57
34	THEWHITECOMPANY.COM (71)	72	=	LITTLEWOODS.COM (51)	57
=	GARDEN4LESS.CO.UK (121)	72	=	PCWORLD.CO.UK (80)	57
=	BOOTS.COM (136)	72	=	HOMEBASE.CO.UK (65)	57
=	DABS.COM (108)	72	75	DIY.COM (B&Q) (167)	51
=	LOVEFILM.COM (134)	72			

Sample size is shown in brackets. Customer score (%) in red.

## OUR RESEARCH

We surveyed 14,671 Which? Connect members in July and August 2011 about the online shops they'd used in the previous six months. The customer score for the main table (above) is based on satisfaction with the site when they last bought an item in one of the eight categories, and their likelihood of recommending the site to a friend.

The customer score for the category tables is based on the same criteria, but only for products in that particular category. Shoppers also rated price, product stock (including range and availability), delivery, and website usability in the tables on p22-25. For full results go to [www.which.co.uk/onlineshopsresults](http://www.which.co.uk/onlineshopsresults)

## EXPERT VIEW

### PERSONALISED PRICING



Personalised pricing (or price discrimination), occurs when online shops charge different prices to different users for the same items. This may happen because they live in different cities or have different browsing histories on their computers. Although the practice is against consumer protection regulations, some sites have done it in the past.

To find out if any sites were currently doing this, Which? researchers stationed around the country checked prices on 216 items on the same websites at the exact same times. We found no examples of personalised pricing, suggesting that if it does occur, it isn't a widespread practice.

But, we did observe that for products which Amazon.co.uk sells through third-party sellers, customers are sometimes redirected to different third-parties, who often charge different prices.

For the iPod Touch 32GB, some researchers were directed to buy the product from a seller called Electronics4All, while others were directed to Digiplus, which was selling it at a slightly higher price. All researchers accessed the page using the same URL.

A small link under the heading 'More buying choices' offered customers a full list of sellers, but unless you click on this link you might not get the lowest price. For one item we looked at, you could have saved more than £50 by buying from one of the sellers listed under 'More buying choices'. We think Amazon customers should automatically be directed to the seller which offers the lowest price, provided they also have good feedback from customers.

Amazon says it offers one price on any product. It said: 'We always display prices and promotions to all customers. Everyone is able to benefit from the same offers provided by Amazon.co.uk and third-party sellers.'

'The Buy Box that appears on a product page can be from Amazon.co.uk or a third-party. We aim to provide the offer that represents the best overall shopping experience, taking into account considerations such as price, availability, delivery and customer feedback.'

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BOOKS, CDs & DVDs



Amazon.co.uk is your favourite site for buying books, CDs and DVDs, with Abebooks.co.uk a close second.

Amazon finished top of this category in last year's survey, and is by far the most-visited site for books, CDs and DVDs among Which? members, so it's not surprising that it's come out on top here.

Members were impressed by the availability of stock. 'Amazon offers superb value for money and always has ample stock. It's especially good when it comes to locating a rare or old CD,' said one member.

Another member said: 'I like the wishlist feature, and being told when an item has come in stock.'

A good stock of items was also mentioned by several Abebooks

customers: 'Its choice of books is truly impressive and descriptions of titles are always accurate. A very reliable service all round.'

One member said: 'Having an alert to know when a rare book becomes available is really good – the World War I book I wanted became available in California, and was shipped to me speedily and at a reasonable cost.'

Zavvi.co.uk was rated as the worst site in this category. 'I've been waiting for over a month for an item that is showing as available,' said one member who had shopped there.

**WHAT ABOUT THE REST?**

Lovefilm and HMV were joint 8th with 72%, with Waterstone's in 10th place on 70%.

CLOTHES, SHOES & ACCESSORIES



JohnLewis.com and Fingleaves.com finished joint winners in the clothing and footwear category of our survey last year, but this year John Lewis has pulled away and is the clear number one in this category.

Your preference for John Lewis is reflected in its higher scores for website usability and for returning items (the score for this can be found in our full results online). Members also rated it highly for deliveries – one liked the option of being able to collect from their local Waitrose, and others were pleased by the next day delivery.

The lowest-rated online shops in this category were BHS.co.uk, Tesco.com and Littlewoods.com.

It's no surprise BHS.co.uk scored poorly, as almost three in ten members experienced a

problem when shopping via its online store.

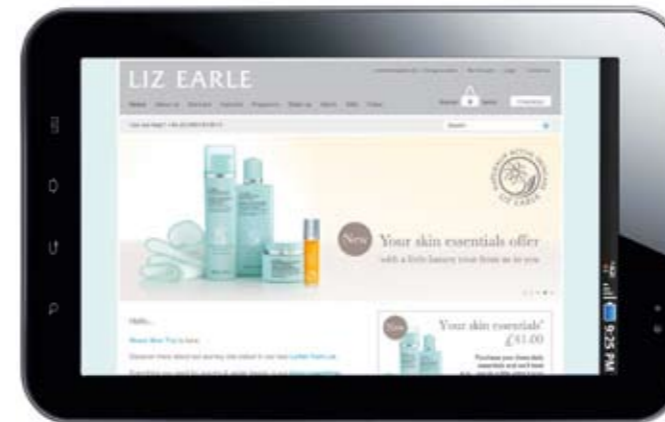
Tesco scored well on price and returns, but was let down by its poor ratings for product stock and website usability.

Littlewoods also received a low rating for its stock, with one member saying: 'They always seem to be out of stock on a lot of items and certain sizes.' Other members said they find Littlewoods too expensive, though one said: 'There are some bargains to be had if you stick to the sale items.'

**WHAT ABOUT THE REST?**

Asos.com scored 71%, putting it in joint 9th. CottonTraders.co.uk, the second most-visited site in this category, came joint 11th (70%).

COSMETICS & TOILETRIES



There were few surprises in this category as LizEarle.com and JohnLewis.com, the two most popular sites in our survey overall, came out on top. This is similar to last year's performance which saw Liz Earle and John Lewis finishing first and second in the Toiletries category.

Several members liked that Liz Earle includes free samples of other products along with the items you order. One said: 'It feels like they really care about your shopping experience.' Another said: 'My order always arrives before I expect, beautifully wrapped and securely packaged.'

One John Lewis customer said: 'It has excellent offers in the sale, and has items in stock that had sold out in the store.' Another said:

'The website is clear and easy to use, my items arrived very promptly and were well packed.'

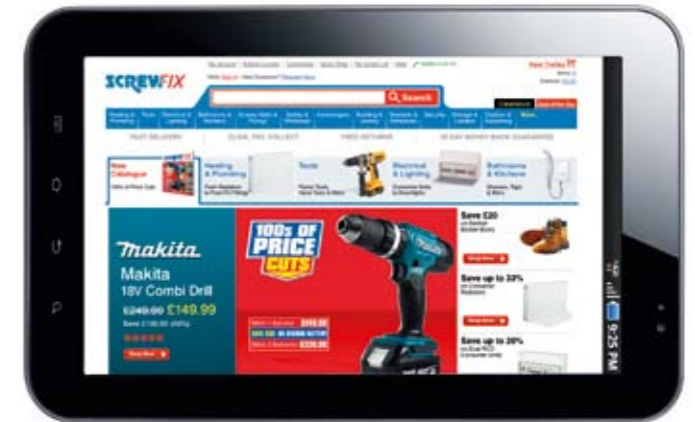
The other end of the table also looks familiar, with ChemistDirect.co.uk once again occupying the bottom spot. One in seven members who shopped at this website had a problem – more than any other cosmetics and toiletries site. Several members said that they felt items ordered from ChemistDirect.co.uk took too long to arrive.

Amazon.co.uk and CheapSmells.com were the two most-visited sites for toiletries and cosmetics.

**WHAT ABOUT THE REST?**

Boots.com, the third-most visited site in this category came in 7th place with a score of 77%.

DIY & GARDENING



Your top online shops for DIY and gardening products are Amazon.co.uk, Screwfix.com and QVC.com.

This is a brand new category in our survey, but Amazon and Screwfix also performed very well in the home and garden category last year – which may be why they're also your most-visited sites for gardening and DIY products.

Reflecting the fact that Which? members value price highly when shopping online, Amazon and Screwfix were rated best for price and got the highest overall ratings.

One member said of Amazon: 'They happened to have a product I was having difficulty finding in shops/garden centres and so I was pleased to find it.'

A member who had shopped at QVC said: 'The plants are always

in good condition; the packaging protects them well. There are good online descriptions or video links so that you are well informed before you select your items.'

B&Q and Homebase were the worst online shops for gardening and DIY products. The B&Q website was judged 'difficult to navigate' by one member and 'not always easy to search for specific items' by another. Several members said they felt a lack of stock was a problem for Homebase.

GardeningDirect.co.uk was the third most-visited site after Amazon and Screwfix, despite one in five members reporting a problem with a purchase from it.

**WHAT ABOUT THE REST?**

Wickes.co.uk was 7th, scoring 68%.

BOOKS, CDs & DVDs

	PRICE	PRODUCT STOCK	DELIVERY	WEBSITE USABILITY	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)	
1	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	88
2	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	86
3	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	81
4	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	80
5	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	78
6	★★	★★★	★★★	★★	★★	74
13	★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	63
14	★★★	★★	★★★	★★	★★	60
15	★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	57
16	★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	48

Sample size in brackets a (144) b (186). View full results at www.which.co.uk/bookcdsites

CLOTHES, SHOES & ACCESSORIES

	PRICE	PRODUCT STOCK	DELIVERY	WEBSITE USABILITY	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)	
1	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	87
2	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	80
3	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	79
4	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	76
5	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	74
=	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	74
=	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	74
20	★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	57
21	★★★★	★★	★★★	★★	★★	56
22	★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★	55

Sample size in brackets a (556). View full results at www.which.co.uk/clothingites

COSMETICS & TOILETRIES

	PRICE	PRODUCT STOCK	DELIVERY	WEBSITE USABILITY	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)	
1	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	92
=	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	92
3	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	82
4	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	80
5	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	79
=	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	79
8	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	76
9	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	75
10	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★	★★★	71
11	★★★	★★★	★★	★★	★★	62

Sample size in brackets a (63). View full results at www.which.co.uk/toiletriesites

DIY & GARDENING

	PRICE	PRODUCT STOCK	DELIVERY	WEBSITE USABILITY	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)	
1	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	81
=	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	81
3	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	79
4	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	75
5	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	74
6	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	72
8	★★	★★★	★★★	★★	★★	61
=	★★★	★★★	★★	★★	★★	61
10	★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	56
11	★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	49

Sample size in brackets a (103). View full results at www.which.co.uk/gardeningites

## FURNITURE & HOMEWARES



JohnLewis.com is the top-rated online shop for buying home and furniture products, but Lakeland.com, Amazon.co.uk and Marksand Spencer.com were all close behind.

We've split last year's home and garden category, which John Lewis also topped, into two new categories – DIY and gardening and furniture and homewares.

John Lewis is the most-visited website in this category, and based on the high marks it received for its delivery and stock, it's easy to see why. 'I used it to make a wedding list – it was very convenient,' said one member who used the site.

Amazon, Lakeland and M&S also received high praise. One member said: 'I was dubious of the mattress I bought from Amazon as it was so much cheaper than at

other stores and online retailers, but it's one of the most comfortable mattresses I've ever slept on.'

Lakeland, whose product stock was rated higher than any other home and furniture site, was described as 'useful for finding items that are difficult to buy locally' by one member.

Another member said of Marks & Spencer: 'The furniture was good quality, well packaged and was the same as in the photo.'

B&Q is the lowest-scoring online shop for home and furniture products. 'On occasion, the website said products were available in store when they were not,' said one member. 'The website is slow and it sometimes has incomplete or inaccurate product info,' said another.

## BABY & CHILD



Amazon.co.uk, JohnLewis.com and Kiddicare.com are the top-rated sites for baby and child products. Last year John Lewis was top in the baby and toddler category, but this time Amazon leads the pack. Amazon is also the most-visited site for this category.

One member said: 'Amazon's baby and child product returns policy is excellent. We bought a faulty pram and they sent a replacement and picked up the faulty one very quickly.'

'There's a wide selection of children's books and educational toys which it's difficult to find in any store in the south west,' said another Amazon customer.

And a member who had bought baby and child products from John Lewis said: 'It has a good

range, an easy-to-use website, and efficient delivery.'

Kiddicare.com, which also performed well last year, was praised by one member for its 'very competitive prices and excellent delivery service.'

Boots.com and Argos.co.uk were the lowest-scoring sites for baby and child products. One unhappy Argos customer said: 'We ordered a slide for our son which took nearly four weeks to be delivered – and we had to pay for delivery.'

Talking about Boots, one member said: 'Its downfall is that it doesn't have a big range, but when it has offers on, its prices can be good. I wouldn't recommend Boots.com or use it often, though, because of its small range.'

## ELECTRICALS



JohnLewis.com has come out on top in electricals for the third year, scoring 88%. Amazon also made a strong showing, and was by far the most-visited site in this category.

As with other types of products, members praise John Lewis for its easy-to-use website and good stock of electrical items.

'I reported an item faulty after a few months of use and John Lewis apologised and replaced it without argument. I've bought other electrical products there in the past with the same problem-free experience,' said one member.

Two of the Dixons Group sites – Currys.co.uk and PCWorld.co.uk – were rated among the worst sites for electricals. Currys performed similarly poorly last year, when it finished 18th out of 20.

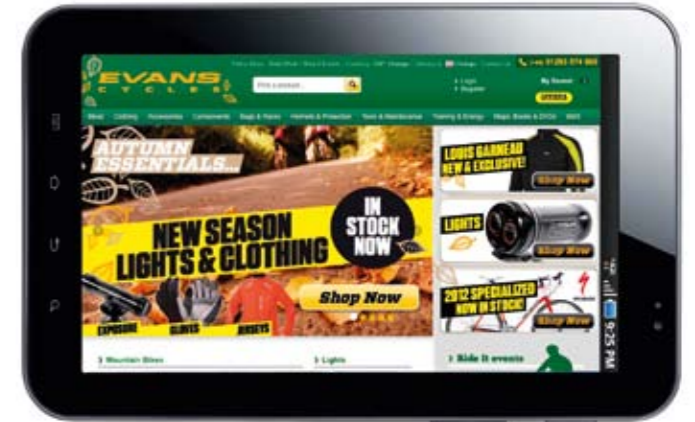
It's joined at the bottom by Asda and B&Q. One member said of the latter: 'The search engine is very haphazard – it will often return 100 items but only two of them will be remotely close to what you want.'

When shopping for electricals, three sites which don't specialise in electrical products caused the most problems for members. Almost one in five members who shopped at B&Q, Boots and Sainsbury's for electricals had a problem with their purchase.

### WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

Argos was the next most-visited site after Amazon and John Lewis. It was joint 20th in the table with a score of 62%. Ebuyer.com was seventh on 75%, and Comet.co.uk scored 63%, putting it joint 17th.

## OUTDOOR & LEISURE



After being named the best site for sports and leisure products in last year's survey, ChainReactionCycles.com has come out on top in the new outdoor and leisure category, along with EvansCycles.com.

One member praised Evans for its 'good website, good choice, and reasonable prices,' adding, 'I like the customer reviews section.'

Chain Reaction Cycles also got high ratings for its product stock and delivery. One happy customer of Chain Reaction Cycles said: 'I ordered new bicycle wheels which had to be made to order and they arrived in 36 hours.'

Wiggle.co.uk and Amazon.co.uk – the most-visited sites for outdoor and leisure products – also received high scores. Amazon

was praised by one member for its 'easy-to-use website, which is important for a beginner like me.'

Cotswold Outdoor was bottom of the pile, but all five sites in this category received good customer scores. One member said of Cotswold Outdoors: 'The range is good but not as extensive as I would like.'

Cotswold Outdoor was rated lower when it came to price than the other outdoor and leisure sites, which may explain why it finished below the rest.

Overall, members reported relatively few problems when buying outdoor and leisure products. Wiggle does have room to improve though, with one in ten of its customers in our survey experiencing a problem.

### FURNITURE & HOMEWARES

	PRICE	PRODUCT STOCK	DELIVERY	WEBSITE USABILITY	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)	
1	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	86
2	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	84
3	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	81
4	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	77
5	★★★	★★★	★★	★★	★★	67
6	★★	b	★★	★★	★★	64
7	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	61
8	★★★★	★★★	*	★★	★★	60
9	★★	★★	b	★★	★★	51

Sample size in brackets a (60) b Sample size too small to be rated. View full results at [www.which.co.uk/homesites](http://www.which.co.uk/homesites)

### BABY & CHILD

	PRICE	PRODUCT STOCK	DELIVERY	WEBSITE USABILITY	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)	
1	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	85
2	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	84
3	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	83
4	★★★	★★	★★★	★★	★★	68
5	★★	a	★★★	a	★★	67
=	★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	67
7	★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	64
=	★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	64

Sample size in brackets a Sample size too small to be rated. View full results at [www.which.co.uk/babyandchildsites](http://www.which.co.uk/babyandchildsites)

### ELECTRICALS

	PRICE	PRODUCT STOCK	DELIVERY	WEBSITE USABILITY	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)	
1	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	88
2	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	86
3	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	83
4	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	82
5	*	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	81
6	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	79
22	★★	★★★	★★	★★	★★	57
=	★★	★★★	★★	★★	★★	57
24	★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	56
25	★★	★★	c	*	★★	49

Sample size in brackets a (42) b (54) c Sample size too small to be rated. View full results at [www.which.co.uk/electricalsites](http://www.which.co.uk/electricalsites)

### OUTDOOR & LEISURE

	PRICE	PRODUCT STOCK	DELIVERY	WEBSITE USABILITY	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)	
1	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	82
=	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	82
3	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	81
4	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	80
5	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	70

Sample size in brackets a (46) b (44). View full results at [www.which.co.uk/outdoorandleisuresites](http://www.which.co.uk/outdoorandleisuresites)



**FULL ONLINE SHOP RESULTS** For the full results of every single retailer surveyed in each category of our survey, including ratings for ease of returning items, visit [www.which.co.uk/onlineshops](http://www.which.co.uk/onlineshops)