

2026

DIGITAL MARKETPLACE PLATFORM SAFETY FRAMEWORK



Introduction

Because consumers are purchasing millions of consumer products every day, it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to know where those products come from or what standards they meet, especially when purchasing products from third-party sellers (3PS). As a result, consumers are concerned about the possibility of purchasing unsafe products and need platforms to take additional steps to ensure product safety. A nationally representative Consumer Reports (CR) survey from [October 2025](#) found that 84% of consumers agree that digital retailers should be responsible for the safety of products sold on their platforms by third-party sellers, just as traditional brick-and-mortar stores are responsible for the safety of all products they sell.

Today's laws and industry practices that govern the marketplace have not kept pace with its

evolution, leaving 3PS e-commerce to grow without the necessary guardrails or industry consensus on ways to continuously improve practices for marketplace safety.

The Digital Marketplace Product Safety Framework is CR's effort to help establish some parameters for measuring platforms' efforts to ensure safety. CR seeks to raise the floor of practices for the entire industry so that consumers have the information necessary to be savvier online shoppers and are made whole if an issue with a product arises. Informed by CR's product testing, consumer research, direct engagement with platforms, and product safety expertise, the following framework outlines four key expectations for digital marketplaces for practices and processes that ensure consumers can shop with confidence that the products they purchase online will be as safe as possible.

Source: [Consumer Reports nationally representative American Experiences Survey of 2,191 U.S. adults \(October 2025\)](#)



The Expectation Principles

1

INFORM CONSUMERS

Consumers are limited to what they can see or hear on their devices when shopping online. Because they cannot directly interact with the product to assess quality or see required packaging warnings, platforms should require sellers to provide the information necessary to bridge that gap. Consumers should have access to clear, accurate, and reliable information to make informed and safe choices when purchasing products online, directly from the platform or from 3PS. This principle deals with all the safety-relevant information provided to consumers throughout the platform, including product pages and seller pages in both app and browser versions of the marketplace. Consumer Reports believes that by setting expectations for transparency in digital marketplaces, consumers will have access to the safest and highest-quality products.

2

RESPOND TO HARMS

Consumers should be able to trust digital platforms to take action when a product poses an unreasonable risk to health and safety. Digital marketplaces should implement recall procedures to make it as easy as possible for consumers to participate in recalls and be made whole. Consumer Reports believes that online platforms can play a critical role in ensuring that consumers have access to a clear and quick recall process when a hazard in a product is discovered and puts consumers at risk.

3

VET SELLERS

Digital platforms should implement strong vetting practices for 3PS that will hold sellers to the highest standards of conduct. When sellers fail to meet consumer expectations and sell unsafe products, online platforms should be able to quickly identify and ban them from the platform. Consumer Reports believes that by setting expectations for seller conduct in digital marketplaces, the platforms can ensure that only 3PS that provide the safest and highest-quality products remain on their platforms.

4

VERIFY PRODUCT SAFETY

Online platforms should strengthen their product safety and compliance practices to ensure that consumer products sold by 3PS meet mandatory and voluntary standards, and follow industry best practices for safety where standards do not exist. Safety information, including certifications and high-risk consumer product category lists, should be easily accessible to consumers. Consumer Reports believes that online platforms should have strong processes in place that ensure products sold online are safe and should confirm that the products meet applicable standards.

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Consumer Reports also believes that by setting those expectations, the platforms can encourage sellers to compete to provide the safest and highest-quality products at affordable prices.

Clear and helpful product information is included on product pages:

- High-quality product images from multiple angles with label details
- Detailed product descriptions (i.e., product dimensions, weight, care instructions, power requirements, if any)
- Engaging content, such as instructional videos (where applicable), downloadable product manuals, etc.
- Mobile apps and websites incorporate barrier-free design to facilitate access to all consumers

Product safety information is clear and accessible on the product page:

- Critical safety information regarding potential hazards and safety guidelines is communicated conspicuously
- Indication that the product meets applicable standards
- Photos and videos depict unsafe environments that are in line with expert guidance, (e.g. no blankets or stuffed animals in cribs or other infant sleep products)

Robust 3PS information is included on seller's page:

- Complete and reliable contact information
- Seller's benchmarks displayed for response rate and response time
- "Seller/Reputation score" that includes seller's performance related to safety
- A history of product safety issues, feedback, and concerns from consumers about seller's products

3PS information is accessible on the product page:

- Complete and reliable contact information and contact methods
- Seller's benchmarks for response rate and response time
- "Seller/Reputation score" that measures seller's performance related to safety

3PS policies are publicly available at a platform level:

- Description of approach to selecting sellers
- Clear and easy capability to find publicly available seller-specific information (i.e., seller's page accessible via main search)

A list of banned/prohibited and restricted products and policies is publicly available:

- List is regularly updated and is easily accessible and consumer-facing
- Reasons for restrictions are clearly stated

A recalled products page is publicly available at a platform level:

- Clear explanation regarding recalls on the page
- Recalls page easily accessible (including link from home page menu)
- Easily searchable within the platform search capability
- Tailored page available for consumer based on individual's purchase history
- Recall progress status is publicly available

An accessible and searchable database of testing certifications applicable to products sold on the platform is publicly available:

- Examples include General Certificate of Conformity ([GCC](#)) and Children's Product Certificate ([CPC](#))

Platform endorsements and designations are clearly explained and easily accessed at the point the label is displayed:

- Explanations of the criteria for labeling products Best Selling, Platform's Choice, Top Seller, etc.
- Clear criteria for labeling any products green or environmentally friendly

Consumers should be able to trust digital platforms to take action when a product poses an unreasonable risk to health and safety. CR's October 2025 survey found that most consumers (86%) think that platforms should at least notify consumers when a product they sell is found to be unsafe. About two-thirds of consumers said that platforms should not only notify consumers but also provide a remedy, such as a refund, replacement, or repair of the product. Digital marketplaces should implement recall procedures to make it as easy as possible for consumers to participate in recalls and be made whole. Consumer Reports believes that online platforms can play a critical role in ensuring that consumers have access to a clear and quick recall process when a hazard in a product is discovered and puts consumers at risk.

Digital platforms should facilitate consumers with a clear and quick recall process when a hazard in a product that they sell is discovered and puts the health and safety of consumers at risk.

Make the recall process as quick (time) as possible:

- Send clear notices to consumers with simple and easy-to-follow instructions on how to receive the announced remedy
- Automate refund process for recalls
- Send notices/reminders regularly and in a timely fashion, not just once

Make the recall process as seamless (process) as possible:

- Use technology and automate processes to limit the number of steps that the consumer must take to receive the remedy
- Use multiple modes of communication (e.g., emails and app notifications) to get consumer's attention
- Easy engagement for impacted consumers

Make the recall process as appealing (incentives) as possible:

- Offer full refunds
- Offer simple instructions to make recalls easy to follow
- Do not require the consumer to mail any parts of the recalled product to prove it has been destroyed when possible

Remove recalled products globally:

- Products recalled in one country, especially those products that have hazards connected to injuries or death, should be addressed in all markets, possibly banned or removed

Digital platforms should implement strong vetting practices for 3PS that will hold sellers to the highest standards of conduct. CR's October 2025 survey results found that 86% of U.S. consumers think digital platforms should thoroughly vet third-party sellers before allowing them to sell on their sites. When sellers fail to meet consumer expectations and they sell unsafe products, online platforms should be able to quickly identify and ban them from the platform. Consumer Reports believes that by setting expectations for seller conduct in digital marketplaces, the platforms can ensure that only 3PS that provide the safest and highest-quality products remain on their platforms.

Strong vetting practices for sellers:

- Previous sales history, if available, is free of any negative attributes, like non-responsiveness and poor or violative business practices

Strong code of conduct for 3PS in place:

- Agree to use reliable manufacturers known for high standards or that meet minimum reputation standards
- Agree and submit proof that manufacturers have not been the source of counterfeits or products that do not meet mandatory standards
- Agree to act quickly when an issue arises
- Comply with strong platform requirements on certifications, including zero tolerance for fraudulent certifications

Prevent recidivism of bad actors:

- Use existing data, including consumer reviews that are currently collected by platforms to identify violative sellers and enforce strong policies on sellers, manufacturers, distributors, or others in the supply chain that fail to meet strong safety requirements
- Establish strong process to assess the authenticity of documentation and certification
- Commit to data minimization, anonymization, and protection practices for consumer data

Verify Product Safety

Online platforms should strengthen their product safety and compliance practices to ensure that consumer products sold by 3PS meet mandatory and voluntary standards, and follow industry best practices for safety where standards do not exist. Safety information, including certifications and high-risk consumer product category lists, should be easily accessible to consumers. Consumer Reports believes that online platforms should have strong processes in place that ensure products sold online are safe and should confirm that the products meet applicable standards.

Compliance with mandatory standards and laws:

- Require compliance with certifications/proof that consumer products meet all mandatory standards
- Establish testing team to spot-check products to ensure compliance
- Use algorithms and other tools to continuously scan for products that may not comply with mandatory standards and inform product safety experts

Authenticate testing certifications:

- Establish strong processes to assess the authenticity of documentation and certification (i.e., UL certified, FCC compliant, etc.)

Maintain restricted product and high-risk product category lists:

- Set clear instructions that outline additional steps that need to be followed for a restricted product category
- Conduct independent spot-checking and testing of high-risk products
- Regularly update list with information as emerging hazards are identified
- Determine “high-risk product categories” using factors such as whether the product is intended or marketed for vulnerable users, its inherent hazard, any new/emerging hazard, and its history of injury/death

Thank You

