2026

DIGITAL MARKETPLACE PLATFORM SAFETY PLAYBOOK

Consumer Reports

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Introduction

Why should you follow this playbook?

85%

of consumers

would be more likely to shop from a platform that was rated highly for product safety by an organization like Consumer Reports

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

The Digital Marketplace Product Safety Playbook is a companion to Consumer Reports' evaluation of digital marketplaces. This playbook outlines key product safety information that must be transmitted to consumers, as well as some crucial elements specific to children's products. It also provides important practices we would like to see platforms adopt and implement to ensure that consumers have all the information they need to make a safe choice for their families. These recommendations are based on Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidance, voluntary and mandatory safety standards, and expertise from consumer safety and health organizations such as Consumer Reports and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Consider this our invitation to a deeper conversation about the ways marketplaces can maximize safety efforts. Implementation of these recommendations aligns with our Digital Marketplace Safety Framework and will set the foundation for higher marks in Consumer Reports' marketplace safety evaluations.

Critical Safety Information

Digital platforms should ensure that sellers adhere to their responsibility to sell safe products and encourage the safe use of their products. The goal is to make sure shoppers have access to at least the same or equivalent information available in-store. **To that end, it is critical for digital marketplaces to require sellers to provide certain information to be included on product pages for consumers in order to best mimic an in-store experience.** This includes clear guidelines and tutorials to educate and help their sellers meet the needs of U.S. consumers.

87%

of consumers

believe it is important for online retailers to display critical safety information that would be available in store with 66% rating it as "very important"

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

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SAFETY INFORMATION

Platforms must ensure that sellers provide required and other pertinent safety information on the product page, including any warnings that would limit how a product can be used and who the intended user is. This includes age grading, supervision requirements, guidelines, or recommendations, as well as potential hazards.

In listing a product on a digital platform, it must be shown being used appropriately and safely. This includes ensuring the photos on the product page depict a safe use environment and give consumers the information they need to purchase the right product and use it safely.

For children's products specifically, it is important to include all required warnings, including the small parts warning. 16 CFR 1500.20(c)(6) and (d) require that the small parts warning (including small balls) that must be visible on the package on a store shelf must also be visible on the product page when it is for sale, either in a catalog or online.

Example: Unsafe sleep environment with blanket inside the crib.

In addition, the platform should help to ensure that sellers never show the product being used in an unsafe manner, such as without a proper guard if required, or by children in a dangerous environment.

Critical Safety Information

SPECIFIC SAFETY MESSAGING FOR CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

Safe Infant Sleep: for any infant product that has been designed or listed on the product page for sleep, or has a setting/function that is designed or listed for infant sleep. For more information, go to safeinfantsleep.org, NIH's Safe to Sleep Campaign, or the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) at healthychildren.org.

- Follow the **ABCs** of safe sleep whenever you show an infant inside a sleep product:
  - Baby is **Alone** and has their own separate sleep space.
    - ◇ Other products, such as padded crib bumper pads, pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, or toys, should not be in the sleep environment.
  - Baby is placed to sleep on their **Back**.
  - Baby sleeps in a **Crib**, play yard, or bassinet that meets the federal safety standard. Never show a baby sleeping in a product not intended for sleep.
- Crib placement in the room is important. Do not put the crib near cords or heating sources. The baby monitor needs to be outside the crib with the cord covered or at least 3 feet away.

For any product where it is foreseeable that a consumer could use it for infant sleep, the product page must make clear that the product is not for infant sleep and should not include any depictions of unsafe sleep practices. Such products include infant loungers, rockers, swings, and bouncers.

Example: Crib image on product page shows unsafe sleep environment with blanket in the crib.

Example: Crib depicted with no unsafe sleep items or conditions.

Critical Safety Information

SPECIFIC SAFETY MESSAGING FOR CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

Pacifiers:

- Pacifier listings should include warnings that consumers should check for tears, breakage, or mold before use and that tying the pacifier around a child's neck poses a strangulation hazard.
- Pacifier listings should not show a baby sleeping in an unsafe sleep environment.

Example: It is unsafe for a baby to sleep with a hat.

Example: Baby shown on a sheet (in crib) with no pillows or other unsafe sleep items or conditions.

Critical Safety Information

SPECIFIC SAFETY MESSAGING FOR CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

Children's Sleepwear:

Children's sleepwear, including pajamas, nightgowns, and robes, from size 9 months to size 14, must pass flammability testing and have safety information pertaining to flammability as outlined in 16 CFR 1615.as outlined in 16 CFR 1615 and 1616.

CR recommends that platforms include the following on the product pages:

- The product listing online should include language that the sleepwear has passed the required testing and include images of any labeling required to be on the garments or packaging.
- The listing should indicate whether flame retardants have been added to the fabric and provide care instructions to avoid removing the added protection.
- The listing should include guidance to help the consumer buy the appropriate size for the child and understand the role of loose clothing in fires.

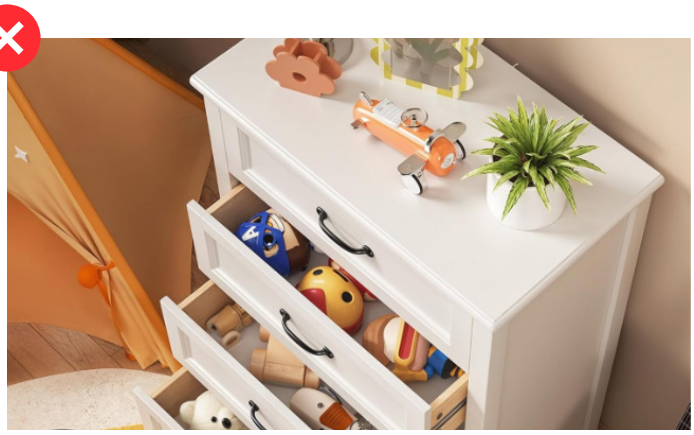
Examples: Safety information pertaining to flammability in children's sleepwear.

Critical Safety Information

SPECIFIC SAFETY MESSAGING FOR CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

Dressers:

- For clothing storage unit listings, do not show items on top of the product that may entice a child to climb on it, such as toys, baby monitors, or remotes. That could lead to dresser tip-overs. Learn more about tip-over prevention at anchorit.gov or parentsagainsttipovers.org.
- Platforms should consider requiring anchoring information on product pages for TV stands, dressers, and all other furniture used for storage—including buffets—and shelving units.



Example: Dresser in child's room shown with toys on top that might entice a toddler to climb on the drawers.

Example: Dresser without any enticing objects on top that might encourage children to climb.

Critical Safety Information

SPECIFIC SAFETY MESSAGING FOR CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

Corded Window Treatments:

- Ensure that any window treatments that are in any image used on a product page show cordless window treatments only. Window coverings with cords can lead to strangulation in under a minute, and showing only cordless window treatments in images can help to reinforce this important safety message. Learn more at cpsc.gov/gocordless or pfwbs.org.

Example: Window blind shown with looped cord, posing a strangulation risk.

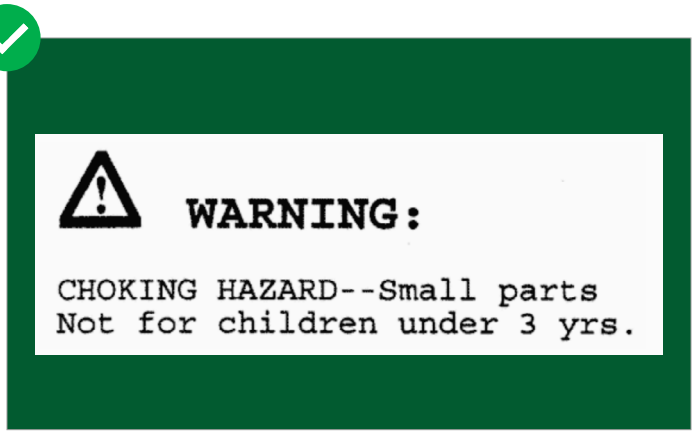
Example: Window shades with no cords, thereby eliminating the strangulation risk.

Critical Safety Information

SPECIFIC SAFETY MESSAGING FOR CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

Small Parts and Supervision:

- For children's products containing small parts, platforms should not allow images of young children (3 and under) playing with them. Small balls and marbles also pose choking hazards and are not suitable for children younger than 3 years. The small parts warning must be visible on any advertisement where the product can be purchased, including online sales. The small parts warning is required on any page where products for children 4 to 7 are sold.
- If adult supervision is required for the product, require images that include an adult, whether they're playing with a child or in the room looking on.



Critical Safety Information

SPECIFIC SAFETY MESSAGING FOR CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

Riding Equipment:

- Children should be wearing helmets correctly in images of bikes, scooters, or other riding toys.

Example: Image on product page for children's bike showing child without a helmet.

*Example: **Safe image showing child wearing a helmet while riding a bike.** Photo: Louis Garneau*

Features for a Safer Marketplace

84%

of consumers

believe digital marketplaces should be responsible for ensuring the safety of products sold on their platforms by third party sellers.

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

BROWSER VS. APP PARITY

The Why:
Because consumers shop for products using both browsers and apps, it is important that they are able to access the same product details regardless of how they shop in any given marketplace. This is especially important for critical product details and safety information and is necessary to make an informed purchasing decision.

The How:
Competition for digital real estate in an app environment can be fierce. Platforms should use their expertise to ensure that their application allows consumers access to much of the same information that they would be able to access on a desktop, including key safety features and information about specific products, seller information, and the platform's recalls page. Product teams should consider safety information a high priority when balancing the app and browser environments. The form of presenting safety information can adapt to the particular environment, but it should not be dropped for brevity.

Features for a Safer Marketplace

ACCESSIBLE AND SEARCHABLE DATABASE OF TESTING CERTIFICATIONS

The Why:
When purchasing children's products online, consumers should have access to the Children's Product Certificate (**CPC**) or third-party test reports. The CPC is a document required by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (**CPSC**) and certifies that the product complies with applicable safety rules. These documents are helpful to build confidence for discerning consumers, as well as give advocates, media, and influencers the ability to do additional research when making recommendations to consumers. **Because platforms can collect CPCs, they should create an online database for consumers to access and search for products they are considering purchasing.** The platform could then work to integrate this information and make it easier for sellers to include links to the database on their seller page and to the specific CPC on the product page.

Products other than children's products that are required to meet CPSC safety standards can provide a General Certificate of Conformity (**GCC**), which can also be included in the database.

The How:
This database should be easily accessible from multiple points on the website. **At a minimum, it should be linked from the platform's safety page as well as in a menu on the landing page.** The database should also ensure that the consumer can easily download a copy of the CPC to keep for their records. Platforms should also provide consumers the option to easily query the platform for a specific product by using product-specific information, such as its full listing name or platform-specific product number (like ASIN). Consumers should also have the ability to provide feedback if they discover an issue with the certificate (e.g., the certificate is for a different product or it shows test failures).

Features for a Safer Marketplace

86%

of consumers

say platforms should thoroughly vet sellers before they are allowed to sell on a site including steps like verifying seller identity, history, and compliance with safety rules.

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

SELLERS SHOULD BE DIRECTLY SEARCHABLE

The Why:
Consumers should not have to scour customer reviews to learn more about the seller, or about the product. The consumer should be able to easily know whether the seller has a poor response time or whether many of its products have been the subject of consumer complaints or have been recalled. **As such, platforms should ensure that easy-to-understand information about any given seller is included throughout the marketplace.** This includes an easy-to-find and easy-to-understand rating or score that reflects the seller's reputation and safety record. Platforms should also consider creating the ability for consumers to find third-party sellers and their contact information more easily. This would allow consumers to better interact with the third-party seller and resolve any issues or concerns that may arise.

The How:
Sellers should be easily accessible from the marketplace's home page, at a minimum, as well as be easily searchable by product type, name, or rating. Providing this capability would allow consumers to search for and find seller information without first navigating to a specific product page, to find sellers for items that were gifts, and to return to sellers with whom they've had a positive experience. In addition, consumers should be able to quickly and seamlessly download or access the seller's contact information. Consumers should also have the ability to provide feedback if they discover an issue with a seller's entry (e.g., the seller's contact information is unavailable or invalid).

Features for a Safer Marketplace

SELLER SCORE/REPUTATION

The Why:
Similar to having access to product ratings and reviews, consumers should also have the ability to see a seller's ratings or scores that reflect the seller's overall trustworthiness and safety record.

The How:
The seller's score/rating should be available to consumers on the seller's product pages and its individual storefront pages. The platform should use factors such as responsiveness, any history of recalls, and customer satisfaction or ratings to formulate a score that is useful for consumers when making their purchasing decisions.

SELLER SELECTION

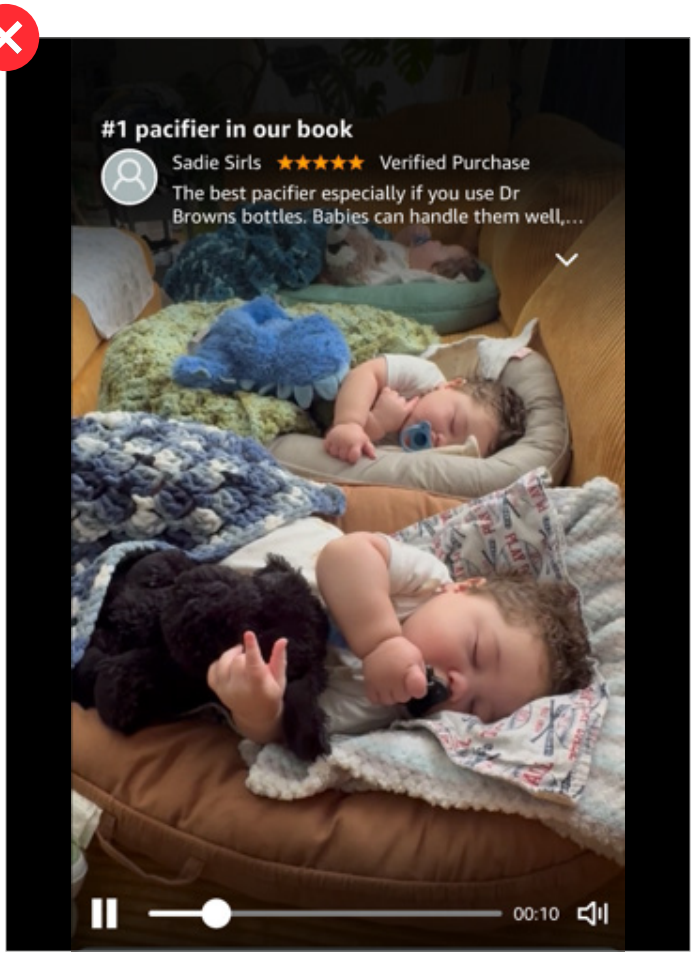
The Why:
Consumers should trust that the sellers on a platform have undergone a thorough vetting process. When customers shop in a physical store, they can trust that the retailer has done its due diligence on the sellers before products make it to the shelves. Consumers may assume that similar rigor is applied to digital platforms and should have a clear understanding of the criteria used to select sellers on the platform and how sellers are promoted when multiple parties sell the same product.

The How:
This information should be a public document easily found through a simple search or as a policy in the platform's About Us, Frequently Asked Questions, or similar section. Platforms should provide consumers with information on how they accept third-party sellers to sell on their marketplaces. Platforms should also include factors that could lead to the termination of the seller's account. Such information and factors could include sales history, complaints, and responsiveness to consumer needs or concerns. Access to these policies can help consumers better understand and trust the platform's ability to weed out bad actors and allow only trustworthy sellers onto its platform, as well as how platforms choose and recommend sellers.

Features for a Safer Marketplace

USER-GENERATED REVIEWS

The Why:
Consumers often rely on the experiences of others to inform their own purchasing decisions for products. As such, customer reviews are prominently featured on product pages and can include images of the product in real-world settings, which may inform the product's potential uses, or even design ideas. Unfortunately, some of these user-generated images have the potential to showcase unsafe practices and scenarios that could put the consumer or their family at risk of harm. **Platforms should closely monitor user-submitted images of their products and remove images depicting unsafe practices.**



Example: An unsafe sleep environment found in a user review.

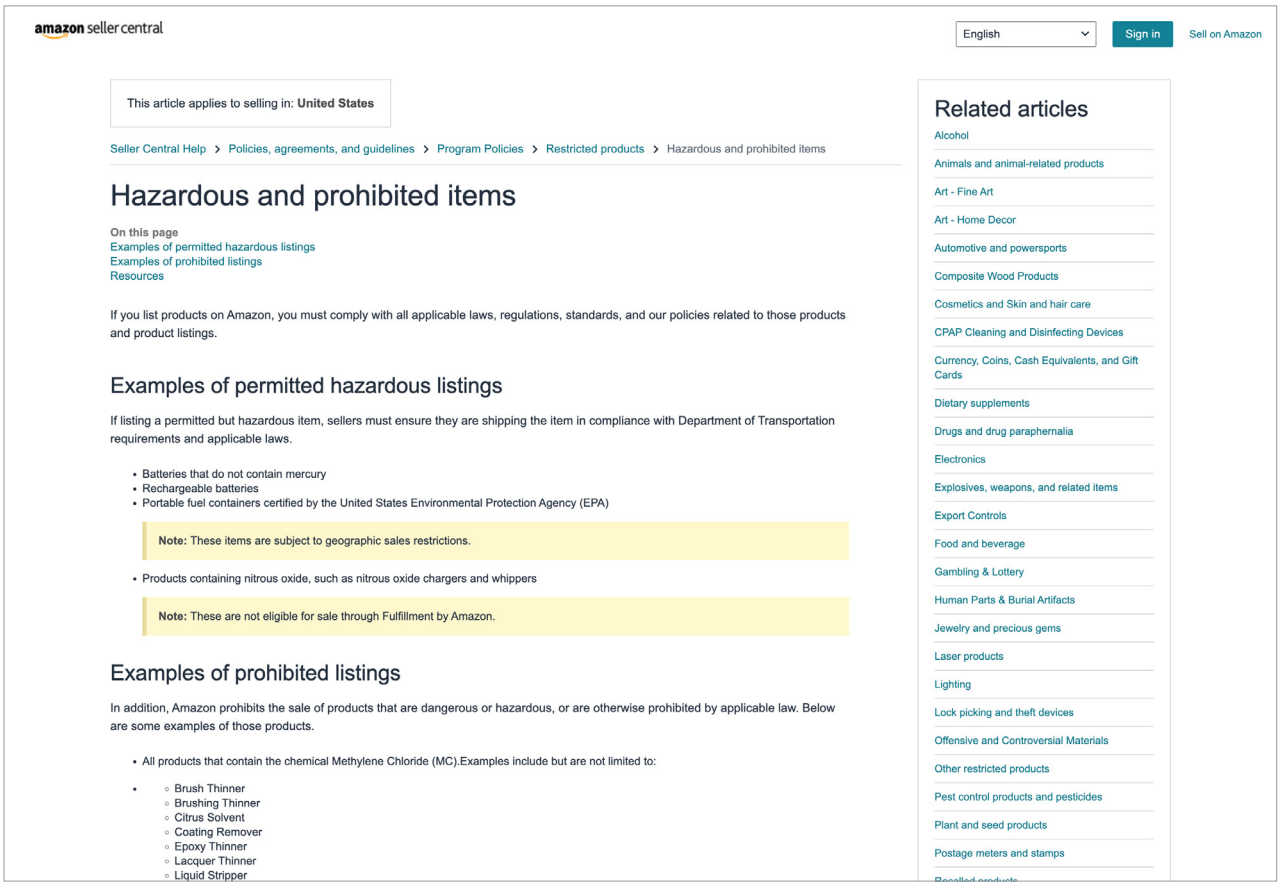
The How:
Digital platforms should use their technological resources, such as image segmentation, to actively detect, review, and address user-submitted images or videos that depict unsafe product use. Platform models for reviewing user-generated content should be trained with important applicable safety information, such as safe sleep practices and furniture anchoring. In addition, platforms should clearly communicate to the consumer that, while user-provided content may depict unsafe practices, the platform discourages such use and encourages consumers to follow all appropriate safety guidelines. These disclaimers should be prominently displayed and make it clear in no uncertain terms that any images appearing in user reviews are not safety-tested or approved.

Features for a Safer Marketplace

BANNED/PROHIBITED AND RESTRICTED PRODUCTS LISTS

The Why:
Consumers should have access to a comprehensive list of products that sellers are not allowed to sell on the platform, as well as any product categories whose sales are restricted. These lists should be easily accessible and understandable by the consumer. The language should be clear and linked to all relevant recall notices or official warnings. Platforms should also provide clear explanations for a product ban or restriction and make them accessible for consumers.

The How:
This comprehensive list should be a separate page that is publicly available for all to review. Consumers should be able to search easily for this information, and even have a link available from the home page. Moreover, if a consumer searches for a product that is banned, they should be directed to safety information about the product category and relevant platform policies to learn the important safety information.

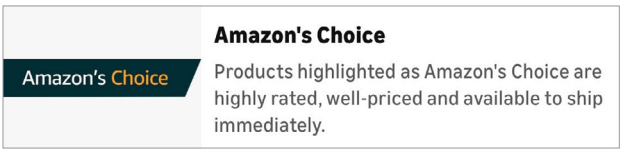


Example: ***Amazon Seller Central***

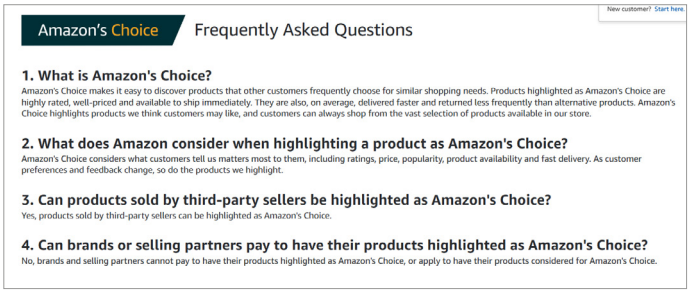
Features for a Safer Marketplace

PLATFORM ENDORSEMENTS

The Why:
Many platforms include phrases or labels in search results and product listings that suggest the product has been vetted, but the criteria for the label are not always apparent. Consumers should be able to easily understand how the platform highlights specific product listings or sellers in its marketplace at the point the label is used.

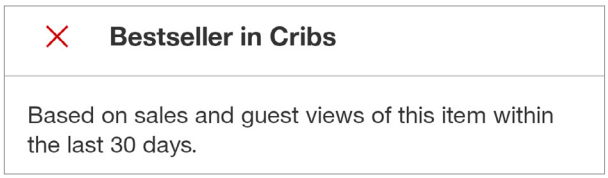


Example: Amazon's Choice explanation on a product page.

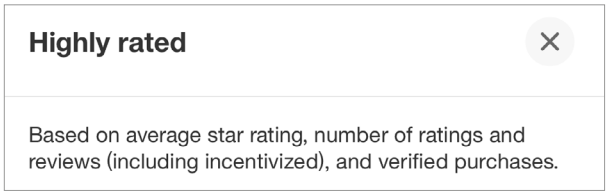


*Example: **Amazon's Choice FAQ page***

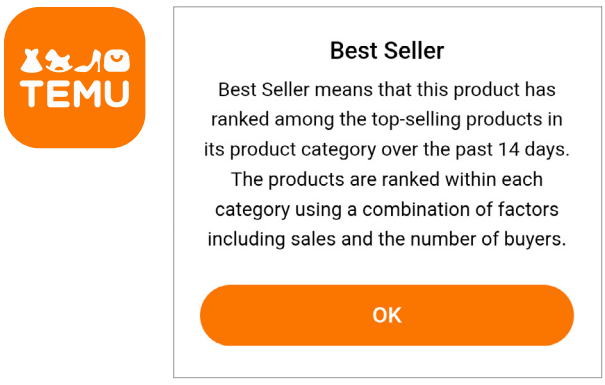
The How:
Platforms should deploy easy-to-use, in-page pop-ups or links to pages that explain to consumers in plain language how their endorsements or labels, such as "Amazon's Choice," Walmart's "Pro Seller," Target's "Bestseller," or Temu's "Best Seller," are determined. These should be available in all versions of the marketplace app and mobile and desktop browsers.



Example: Target's Bestseller for a particular product.



Example: Target's Bestseller for a particular product.



Example: Temu's Best Seller.

Recalls

When a product hazard is discovered that puts the health and safety of consumers at risk, **it is essential that digital marketplaces offer a clear, transparent, and timely recall process that makes it easy for the consumer to participate.** To this end, platforms should establish specific guidelines for their marketplaces and for their sellers on how they can best respond to these hazards and the expectations for when to recall a product, and can be thought of in terms of time, process, incentive, and transparency.

86%

of consumers think online marketplaces should contact consumers if a product is found to be unsafe and *68% believe the platform should provide a refund, replacement or repair.*

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

TIME

In the unfortunate event that a recall is necessary, it is important for the process to be as quick as possible.

- Once a product is discovered to be hazardous, platforms should have processes in place with their sellers to ensure that recalls are initiated as soon as it is feasible.
- When a recall is announced, platforms should contact consumers and make them aware of the recall as soon as the announcement is public.
- Notices and reminders should be sent to consumers on a regular basis. Consumer notifications should not be limited to the initial announcement.
- With all other aspects of the digital platform, we strongly recommend that platforms experiment and continuously improve their timing and communications to optimize consumer recall participation.

PROCESS

All reasonable steps must be taken to reduce strain on the consumer in the event of a recall and make the process as seamless as possible.

- Technology and automated processes should be utilized to limit the actions that consumers must take to receive their remedy and be made whole.
- Refunds should be automatically initiated and applied to all affected consumers.
- Multiple methods of communication (e.g., email, text, app notifications) increase the likelihood that the consumer receives the message.
- Any action that is required on the part of the consumer needs to be clearly communicated and include easy-to-follow instructions.

Recalls

INCENTIVE

In order to facilitate consumer participation and awareness of the recall process, consumers should be incentivized in an appealing manner.

- Platforms should strongly encourage their third-party sellers to offer consumers full refunds as an option. If the third-party refuses to, the platform should consider offering a full refund to the consumer because it is essential for any recalled product to be removed from the home.
- Except for a few circumstances, CR discourages offering only repairs for recalled products and recommends that platforms discourage their sellers from offering repairs as well.
- Consumers should not be required to submit burdensome proof or perform burdensome tasks, such as mailing parts of the recalled product to prove that it has been destroyed.

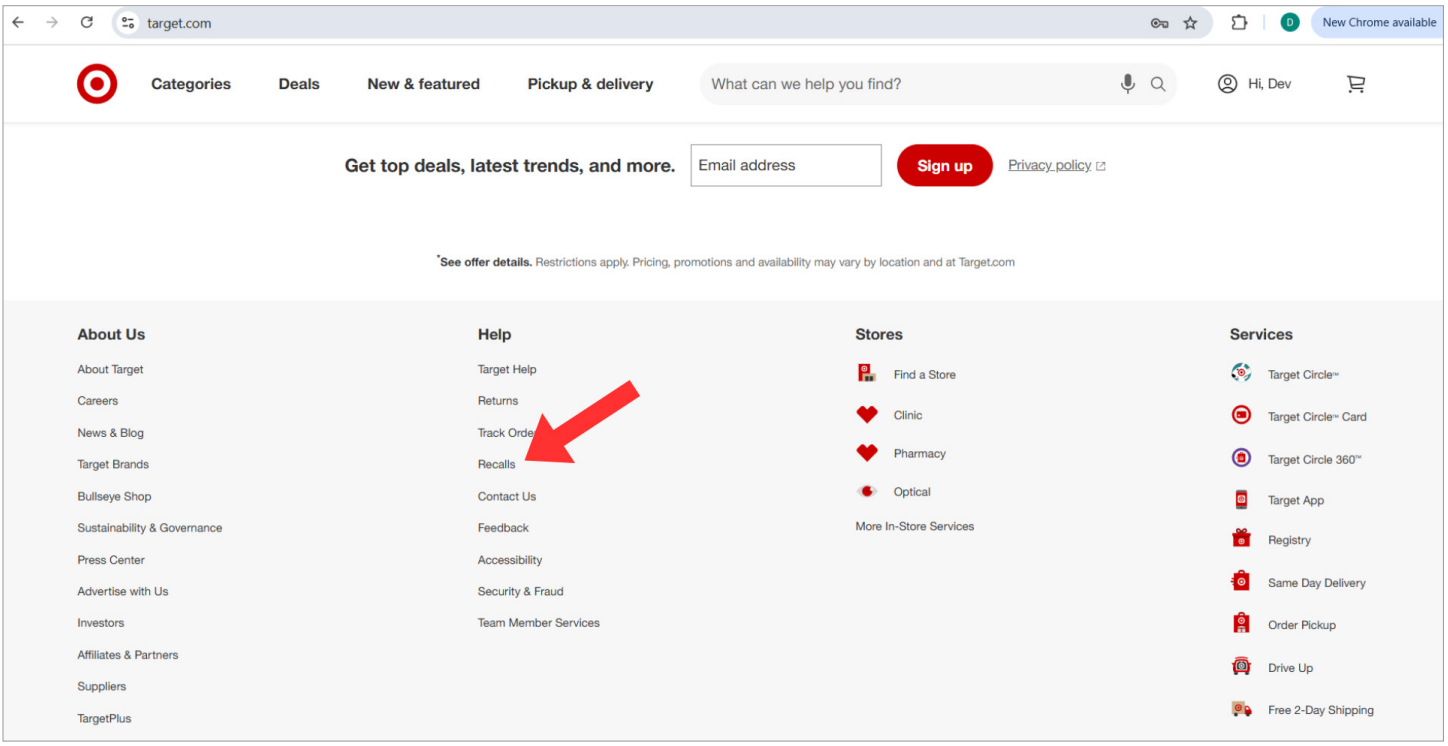
Recalls

TRANSPARENCY

When a product on a platform has been recalled, it should be promptly removed from its marketplace and listed on its recall page. **A list of recalled products must be easy to find and accessible to consumers using the platform.** To this end, digital marketplaces should design their platform in such a way that consumers can find and access the pertinent information with little effort. This page should also be updated when the recall notice is published, on the same day of the recall announcement. The formatting of the titles of recalls can change and become confusing for some recalls. They should be checked regularly and updated as needed.

In addition, if a company refuses to recall a product or the CPSC is unable to contact the company, the agency will issue a product safety warning. Platforms should also ensure that this warning information is clearly communicated and easily accessible to consumers.

- The recall page should be linked from a menu on the home page.

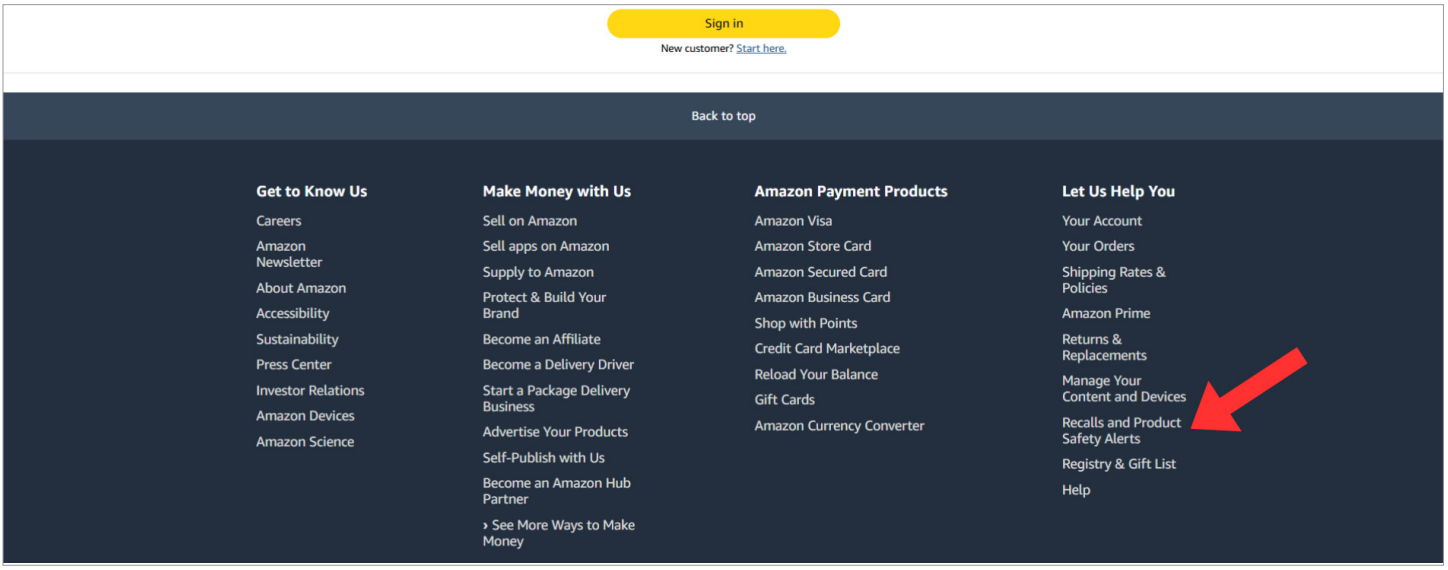


*Example: **target.com***

Recalls

TRANSPARENCY

- The link should include the words "product safety" and "recalls." That way, platforms can also add safety warnings released by any public health or safety agency.

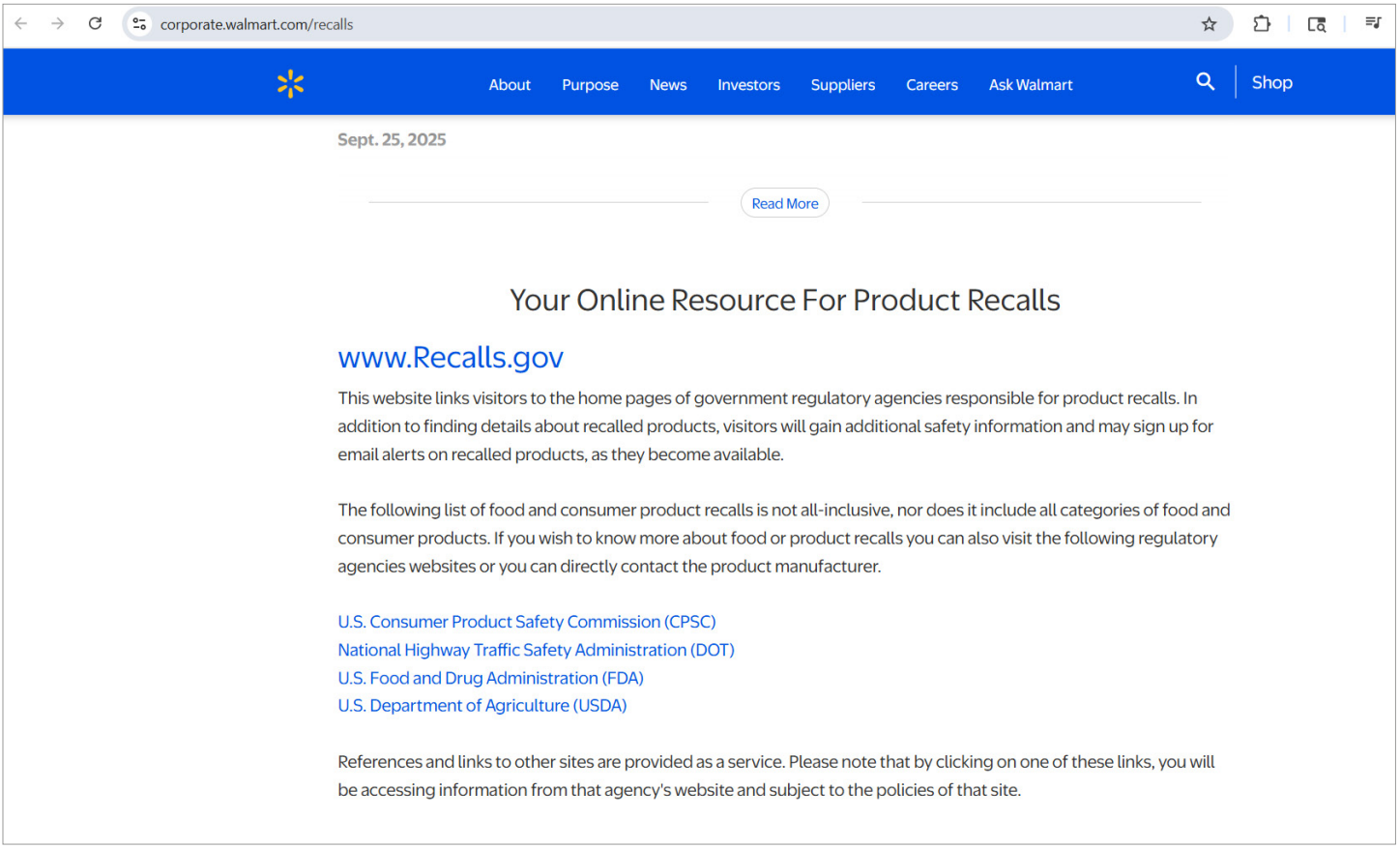


*Example: **amazon.com***

Recalls

TRANSPARENCY

- Separate from individual recall listings, the page should contain links to the recall pages of each government agency—CPSC, FDA, NHTSA, USDA—which include recalls of products sold on the website. The platform can also use **Recalls.gov** to link to all recalls from the different agencies, but this adds additional steps.

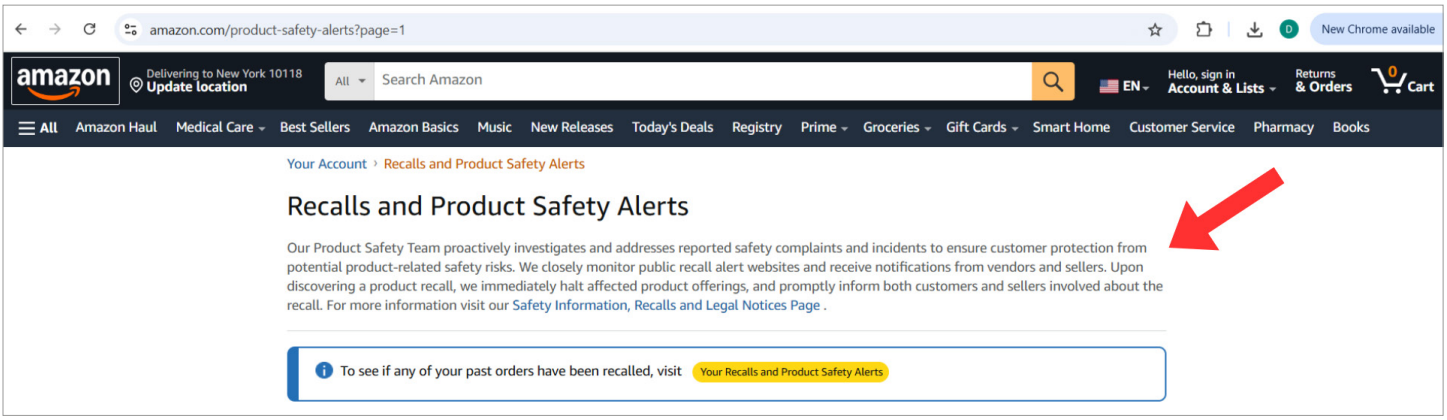


Example: ***Walmart Recalls***

Recalls

TRANSPARENCY

- The page should have a brief introduction on recalls and the importance of participating.

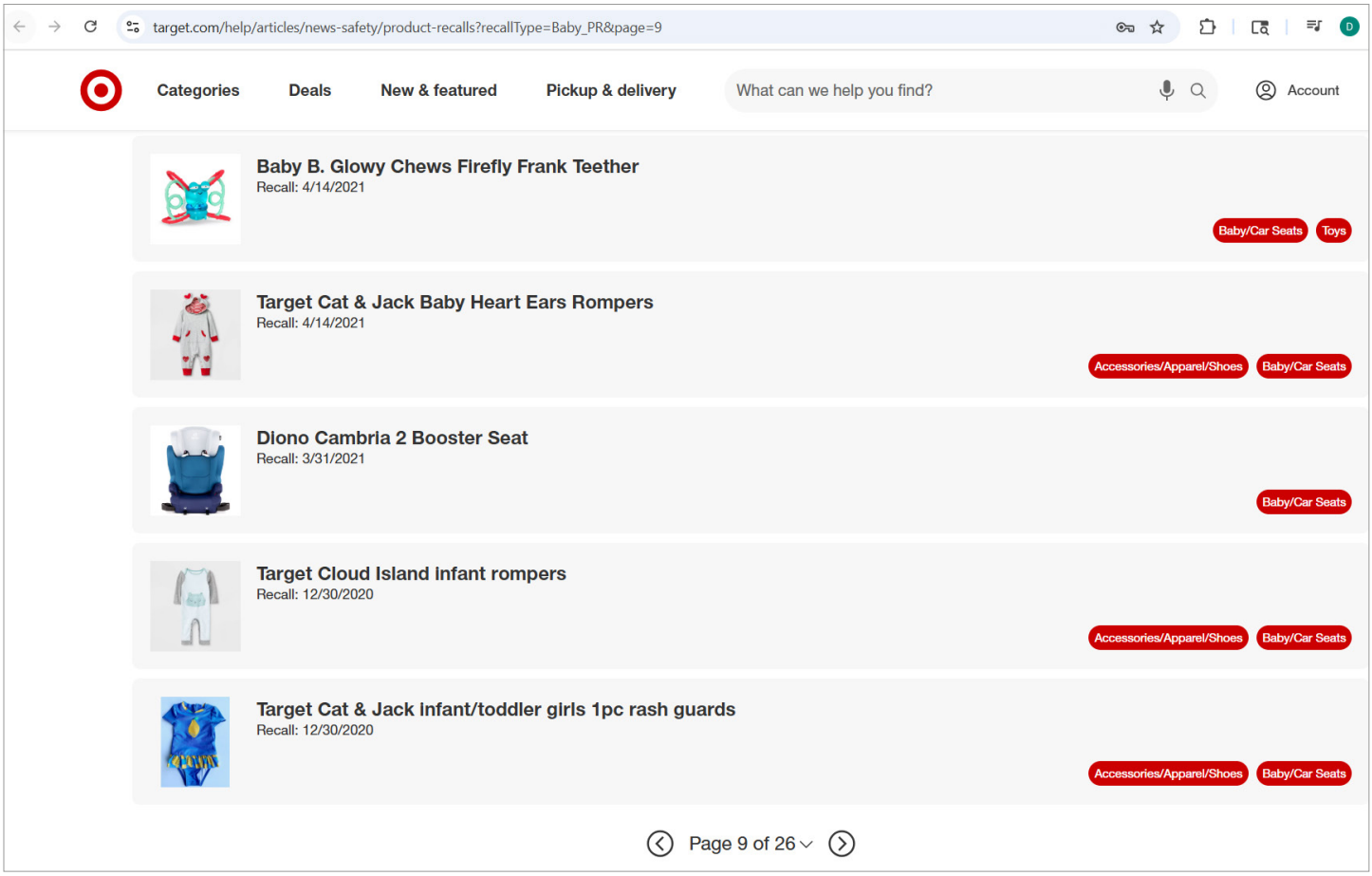


Example: ***amazon.com/product-safety-alerts.***

Recalls

TRANSPARENCY

- The information should cover at least five years of recalls.

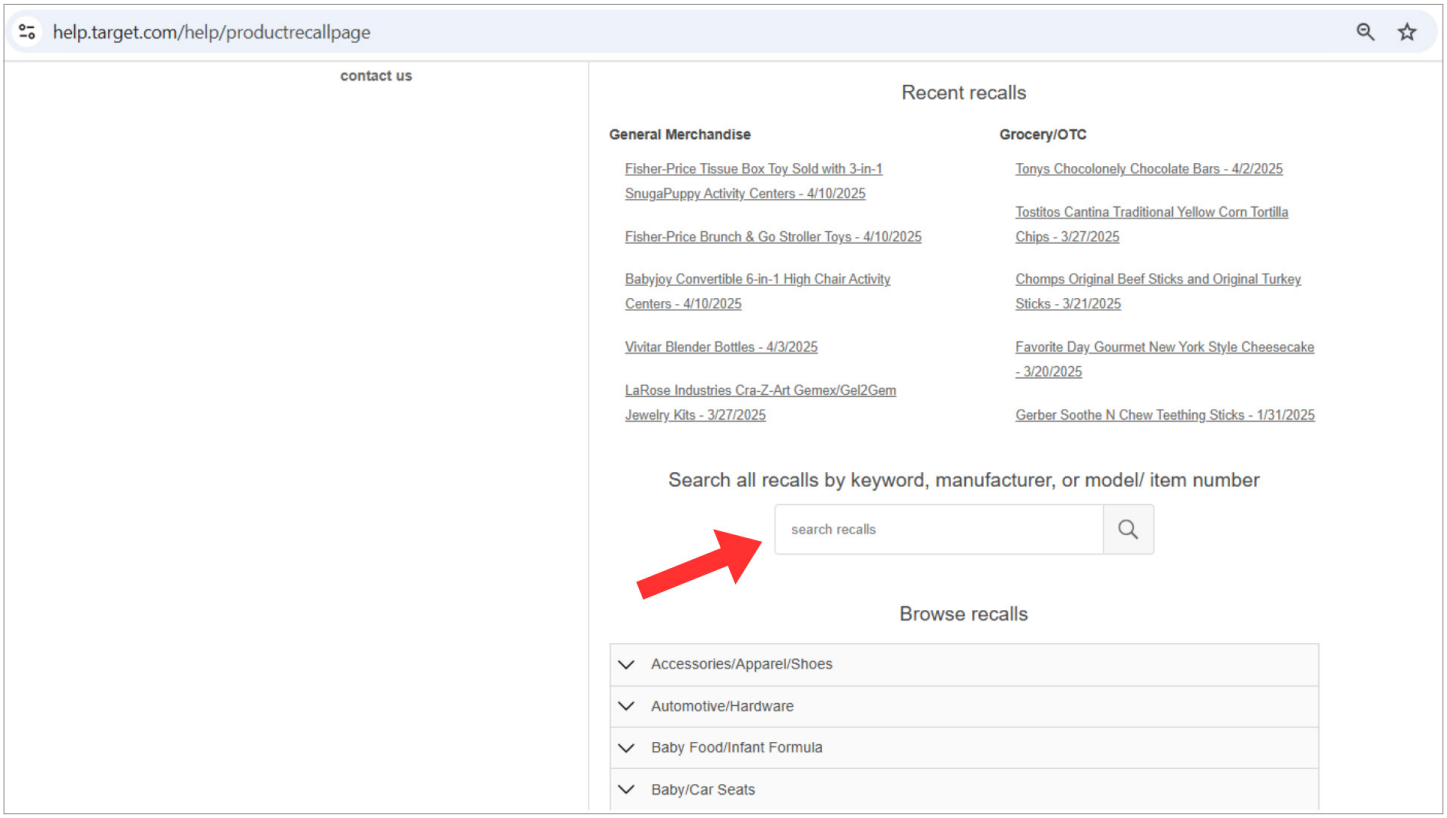


*Example: **Target Recall Page***

Recalls

TRANSPARENCY

- The page should include all recalls of products sold on the site. If the scope of the list is limited, for example, by years, that should be clearly stated, as well as where to find recalls that fall outside the parameter.
- The page should include a search feature to help consumers find specific products, recalls from specific agencies, or products from specific manufacturers.

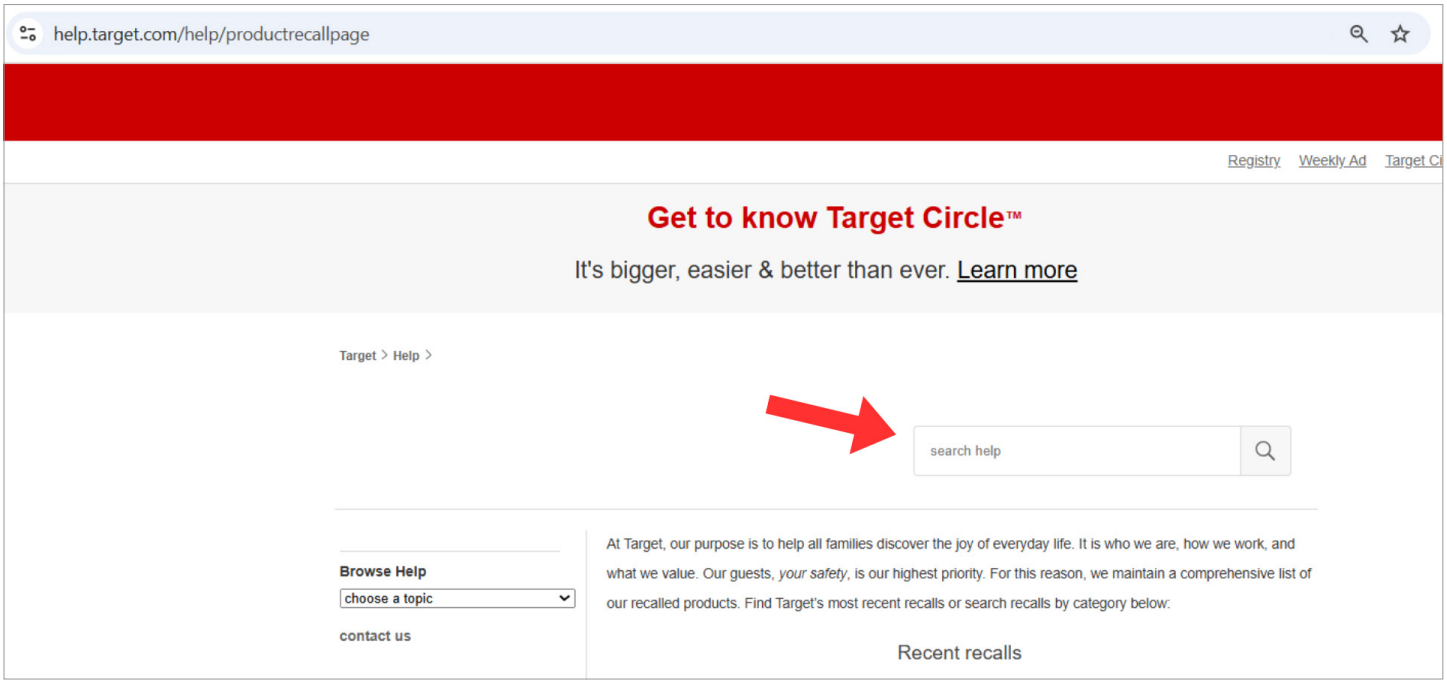


*Example: **Target Recall Page***

Recalls

TRANSPARENCY

- A link should be provided to assist with recall questions.
- A page should be dedicated to providing a progress status update regarding every recall effort of a product sold on the platform.



Example: ***Target Recall Help Page***

Recalls

SPECIFIC LISTING TITLES

The recall header should have the product's manufacturer, brand, name, and other identifying information. It should link to the recall notice from the recalling agency. Note: The CPSC's recall headlines already contain this information, but other agencies such as the FDA and NHTSA may not. See these examples from a platform's listing:

- Sensio Recalls Steam Espresso Machines Due to Burn and Laceration Hazards (CPSC) (Manufacturer, product name, hazard)
- Class 1 Device Recall Ballard (FDA) (Brand only)
- Child Seat May Allow Excessive Movement/ FMVSS 213 (NHTSA) (Hazard and product type, no brand or model)

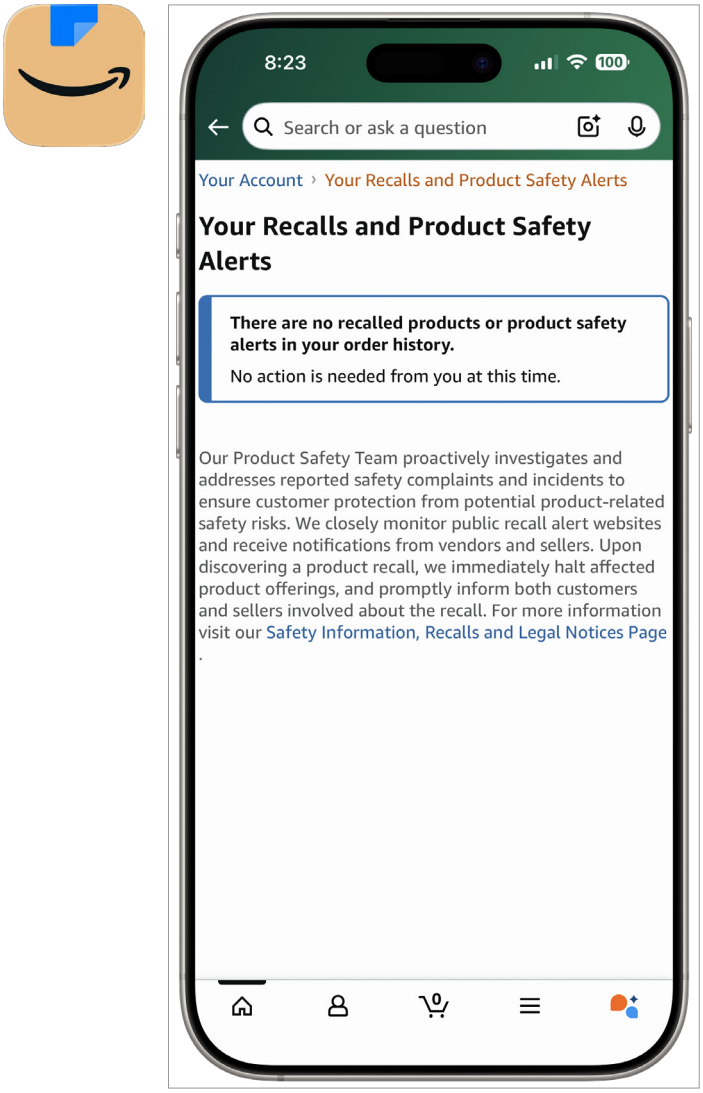
It is sufficient to list the information above and link to the full recall notice.

PERSONALIZED RECALL INFORMATION

The platform should include a page dedicated to providing the consumer with detailed and tailored information based on their individual purchase history within the platform. For instance, there should be a "My Recalls" or similar heading in the My Account or Customer Service/Support sections of the page that specifically displays any recalls that are immediately associated with prior purchases.

RECALLS ACROSS COUNTRIES

A product that is unsafe in one country is unsafe in other countries. Therefore, once a product is discovered to be hazardous or has put people at risk, or even injured or killed someone, it should be removed from the platform globally. Everyone who purchased the dangerous product in all countries should be informed about the potential risks and hazards associated with it, and the product should be removed from all sites.



*Example: **amazon.com/product-safety-alerts***

Other Product Safety Resources

The following are key resources we strongly encourage platforms to link and refer to.

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

- Healthy Children

Parents Against Tip-Overs (PAT)

Parents for Window Blind Safety (PFWBS)

Reese's Purpose (preventing button- and coin-cell battery ingestion)

Charlie's House (preventing at-home child injuries)

That Water Bead Lady (helping families after product injury)

Safe Infant Sleep

Thank You
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