

Book-up

Your rights in Australia

What is book-up?

Book-up is short-term credit offered by a shop owner that lets you buy goods or services and pay for them later. Some shop owners will charge a fee for allowing you to use book-up.

Generally, when shop owners charge fees for bookup, they need to follow the credit laws. This means they need to have a special credit licence and they are not allowed to offer credit if you can't afford to repay them.

In remote areas, book-up is often the only or most convenient way to buy goods on credit or get a cash advance.

Good bookup

A good book-up service is one where:

- > prices of goods or services are the same whether you pay cash or use book-up.
- > the prices of goods are clearly marked either on the shelf or on the goods themselves
- > the shop owner keeps proper records each time you use book-up to buy goods or services
- > you can see your book-up records when you want to
- > the shop owner provides you with an itemised record showing items purchased and cost
- > the shop owner makes no charge, or a reasonable charge, for using book-up.

Disadvantages of book-up

There are disadvantages in using book-up, including:

- > The shop owner may ask for a form of security which is unsuitable for you
- > It can be easy to get into too much debt.
- > There may be high fees for using book-up.
- > There may be a lack of choice in shopping outlets.
- > The shop owner may keep poor records of customer purchases.
- > There is a risk of theft, fraud and unfair conduct.

Security

Shop owners will sometimes take a form of security from you to make sure they receive payment for the goods and services bought using book-up, such as:

- > having welfare cheques sent directly to the shop owner
- > bank debit cards with PINs left with the shop owner
- > regular bank transfers setup from the customer's bank account to the shop owner
- > government payments transferred to the shop owner through the Centrepay system.

The problem with these types of security is that they make it easy for shop owners to cheat you and stop you getting access to your own money.

Checklist for customers

To avoid problems when using book-up, you should make sure you:

- > never give the shop owner your PIN number
- > don't give the shop your credit/debit card
- > know when you have to pay the bill
- > don't buy things you don't really need, it can be hard to get out of debt
- > keep a copy of the arrangement and all receipts
- > have access to check your account records
- > understand any fees and interest that may apply
- > get the terms and conditions in writing
- > confirm that your records will be confidential
- > are clear with the shop owner about who is allowed to charge items to their book-up account.

If things go wrong

If there is a problem with your book-up account, you should try and work it out with the shop owner by showing the shop owner copies of the receipts you have kept as proof of purchase.



If you and the shop owner can't come to an agreement, you should contact the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) on their Indigenous Help Line number 1300 365 957 or visit www.moneysmart.gov.au or alternatively contact your local consumer protection agency.

Where can I get more information?

For general information

Australian Capital Territory

Office of Regulatory Services T. (02) 6207 3000
ors.act.gov.au

New South Wales

NSW Fair Trading T. 13 32 20
fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

Northern Territory

Consumer Affairs T. 1800 019 319
consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au

Queensland

Office of Fair Trading T. 13 74 68
fairtrading.qld.gov.au

South Australia

Consumer and Business Services T. 131 882
cbs.sa.gov.au

Tasmania

Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading T. 1300 65 44 99
consumer.tas.gov.au

Victoria

Consumer Affairs Victoria T. 1300 55 81 81
consumer.vic.gov.au

Western Australia

Consumer Protection T. 1300 30 40 54
commerce.wa.gov.au/consumerprotection

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has national responsibilities for competition, fair trading and consumer protection and can be contacted on 1300 302 502 or visit acc.gov.au