

Understanding Warranties on Things You Buy

Exercice



A warranty is like a promise by the seller that what you buy—whether it’s a bicycle or a computer—will work as it’s supposed to, at least for a certain amount of time.

There are three types of warranties on things you buy:

- the legal warranty, which is a basic warranty that automatically comes with every purchase
- “conventional” warranties from a merchant or manufacturer
- extended warranties

To help you understand how they can be helpful, here is a description of each one.

The Legal Warranty: the Basic Warranty

The legal warranty comes automatically and free of charge with all products you buy from merchants in Quebec, with some rare exceptions. If the product you buy doesn't work, merchant must reimburse you, replace the product or have it repaired.

The legal warranty provides that your product must work normally for a reasonable length of time. The "reasonable length of time" depends on the product. For example, a hybrid bicycle with an aluminum frame should work longer than a plastic tricycle for a three-year old child. It also depends in part on the price you paid. For example, if you go to the store and you buy an inexpensive used bike, you shouldn't expect it to last as long as a new high-tech bike.

Be careful! The legal warranty does not cover problems caused by you. For example, if you buy a new bike and it stops working after one week, the merchant must help you. But if you decide to do wheelies in the park with your carbon racing bike, you'll probably only have yourself to blame if the frame breaks.

Nothing prevents a merchant from offering you a longer or better warranty than the legal warranty. In other words, the legal warranty is the minimum provided by law. So when a merchant wants to sell you another warranty, such as an extended warranty, remember that you already have the legal warranty, since it's automatic and it's free.

The Conventional Warranty of a Merchant or Manufacturer

Conventional warranties are sometimes offered by merchants, but they are usually offered by manufacturers. These warranties are added to the legal warranty. For example, the manufacturer could agree to reimburse you the full price of something you bought that stops working within two years of your purchase.

Sometimes you have to pay a fee to take advantage of a conventional warranty. That fee must be mentioned in the contract describing the warranty.

The length of conventional warranties and the solutions they provide vary because these things are up to the merchant or the manufacturer to decide.

Extended Warranties

Extended warranties are generally offered by the merchant. As a general rule, you have to pay extra for them when you buy something. They can last for three or five years, for example.

When you make your purchase, the merchant must tell you about the legal warranty and the conventional warranty (if there is one) before suggesting an extended warranty. This lets you compare them and make the right decision. If you decide not to take the extended warranty, the legal warranty still applies.

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1. True or false. If I refuse the warranty that the merchant offers me, there is no warranty on the product. Explain your answer.

_____ because

2. Does the legal warranty apply in the following situations? Explain your answer.

a) The cell phone I bought from Bell won't turn on after more than 3 months.

_____ because

b) The screen of the cell phone I bought from Bell cracked because I dropped it on the sidewalk.

_____ because

c) The used bike I bought on Kijiji (online classified ads) breaks after 2 months of normal use.

_____ because

d) The used bike I bought from the Old Bikes store breaks after 2 months of normal use.

_____ because

Understanding Warranties on Things You Buy

Quiz

3. Which of these merchant behaviours is illegal?

- a) Offer an extended warranty without explaining the other warranties that apply
- b) Not offer an extended warranty
- c) Refuse to give me a refund when I've broken something I bought

Why?
