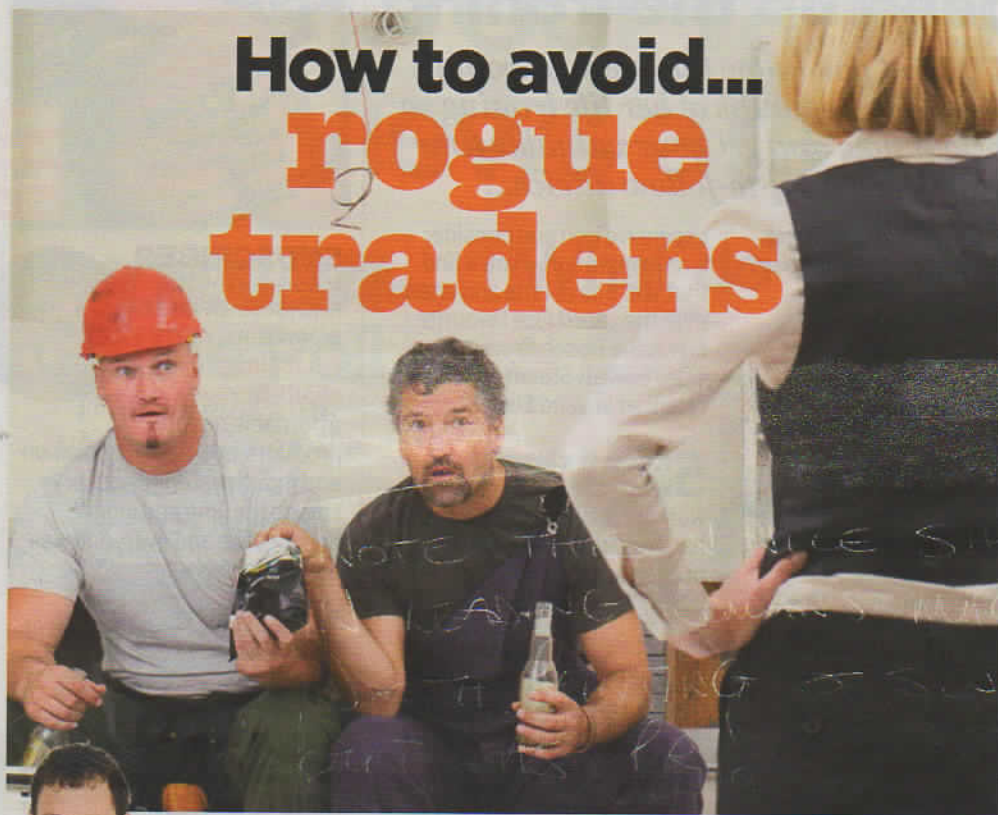


SMART SHOPPING

Money-saving tips **Best buys** **Expert help**

How to avoid... **rogue traders**



Watchdog's Matt Allwright has these tips to beat the cowboys

Where do I start?

Word of mouth is always best, so ask friends and neighbours. Stay local. If they work nearby, they're likely to have a good reputation to protect. Avoid big ads and firms with 0800 freephone numbers. You won't know where they're based.

Do your homework

Make sure you know as much as possible about your broken appliance before you get it fixed. Check the make and model and try to find out how much broken parts cost. Your

knowledge will put you ahead of the game.

Be careful with cash

You might be offered a 'special cash deal.' It might be quite tempting but bear in mind that it's an indication that the workmen are prepared to cut corners on tax – and possibly other corners too.

Does a guarantee really guarantee me anything?

Not really. Call in the guarantee and you may have problems

because rogues will move around and change names. Your best guarantee is previous happy customers that you've spoken to yourself.

Payment up front

Avoid doing this. If workmen need to buy materials in advance, only pay for materials you've seen proof of purchase for and remember those materials now belong to you because you paid for them.

● **Watchdog** is on BBC1 Thursdays at 8pm

4 of the best... TIME-SAVING GADGETS



Astonish Toilet Bowl Cleaner

£2.39 LAKELAND
Pop one of these in the loo and leave overnight. You'll wake up to a toilet that's a germ-free zone. Magic!



Wet Straight Pro

£29.99 JML DIRECT
This two-in-one hair dryer and straightener also helps to keep your mane glossy by using technology that locks in moisture.



Instant Hem

£2.99 LAKELAND
Forget about fiddly stitching and ironing, this sticky tape fixes a dropped hem back to the garment – and it stays put.



Magic Oven Liner

£9.99 LAKELAND
Save countless hours scrubbing the oven floor with this washable liner. Cut to size and pop in your oven to catch spills and splatters.

WORDS SOPHIE COLGATE, TRACEY BALDWIN PHOTOGRAPH ALAMY

Last year too dear now a bargain!

BLU-RAY PLAYER

WAS £220 NOW £149.99

LG BD370 AT CURRYS

This stylish player has an internet connection, so you can watch YouTube on TV in all its glory.



DIGITAL CAMERA

WAS £159.99 NOW £69.99

FUJIFILM J28 AT COMET

With red-eye reduction, picture stabilisation, and handy panoramic shooting mode, taking the perfect snap is a breeze.



VACUUM CLEANER

WAS £79.99 NOW £58.24

HOOVER TF57202 AT DIXONS

Suitable for dust-sensitive allergy sufferers, this bagless cleaner has an exhaust filter that chucks out clean air.

