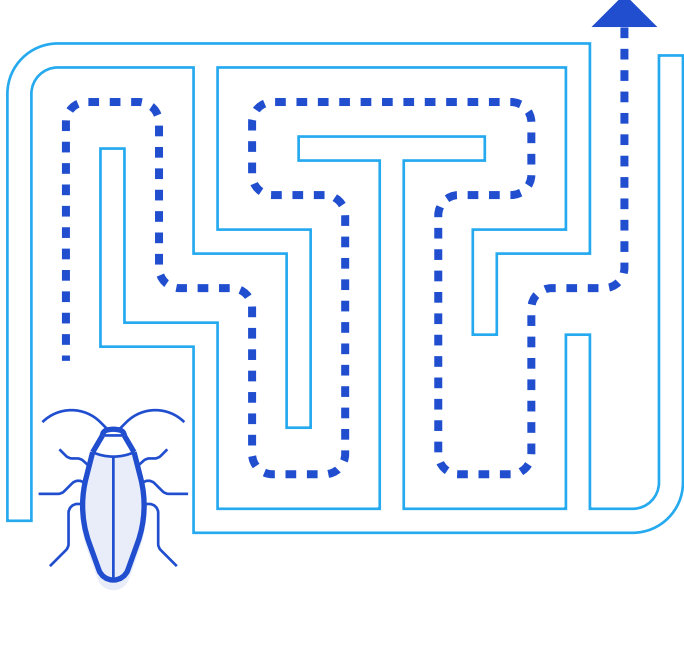


# Common Dark Patterns and How to Avoid Them



## Roach Motel

A roach motel is a service that is easy to sign up for but difficult to cancel. An example is an online subscription that can only be canceled by phone.

### Instead

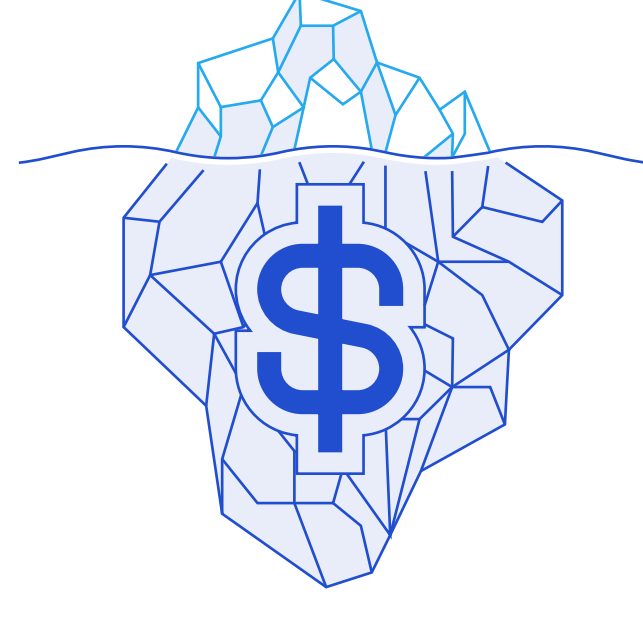
Make it easy for customers to unsubscribe from their account pages. Consider offering a retention package to persuade them to stay before they make their final decision.

## Hidden Costs

Hidden costs aren't disclosed until a purchase is nearly complete. These might include shipping, service fees, or poorly defined "convenience fees."

### Instead

Show the total cost in the shopping cart at all times. Most customers are perfectly willing to accept these fees when disclosed upfront but dislike the secrecy.



## Nagging



## Nagging

Nagging occurs when a site repeatedly interrupts customers with an ad or a call to action. Examples include pop-ups, auto-playing audio or video, or anything else that distracts users from what they came to the site to do.

### Instead

Delay pop-ups until customers have been on the site for at least a few minutes. Even better, show the pop-up on the bottom right or left corner of the screen so the customer can continue whatever they're doing without distraction.



## Disguised Ads

Disguised ads are advertisements designed to blend in with the rest of an interface in order to trick customers into clicking on them. For example, making an advertisement button look exactly like the host website's call-to-action button.

### Instead

Distinguish ads clearly so that customers will recognize them for what they are. Tricking customers into clicking ads will only frustrate them.



## Interface Interference



## Interface Interference

Interface interference is designing an interface to prioritize or preselect certain actions. An example of this is preselecting an option to be contacted by the company, which requires customers to recognize that they need to deselect it. Sometimes these preselections are hidden in a drop-down menu.

### Instead

Show all options and allow customers to make their own decisions and selections.

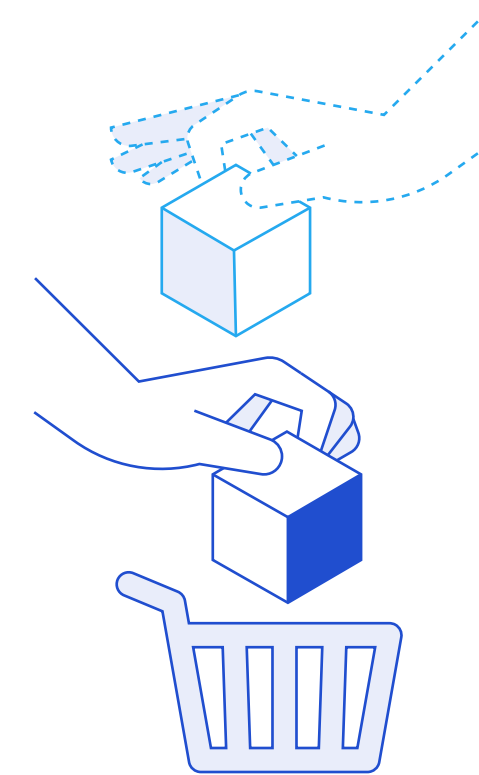


## Forced Action

Forced action is similar to interface interference, except customers don't get a choice in the matter. For example, making a customer submit an email address in order to use a website.

### Instead

Let customers decide whether or not they want to give away personal information in exchange for a service.



## Basket Sneaking

Basket sneaking is the practice of adding items to a shopper's cart that they didn't select themselves. For example, a customer might be shopping for cosmetic items, only to find out that extra sample products were added for \$5 each.

### Instead

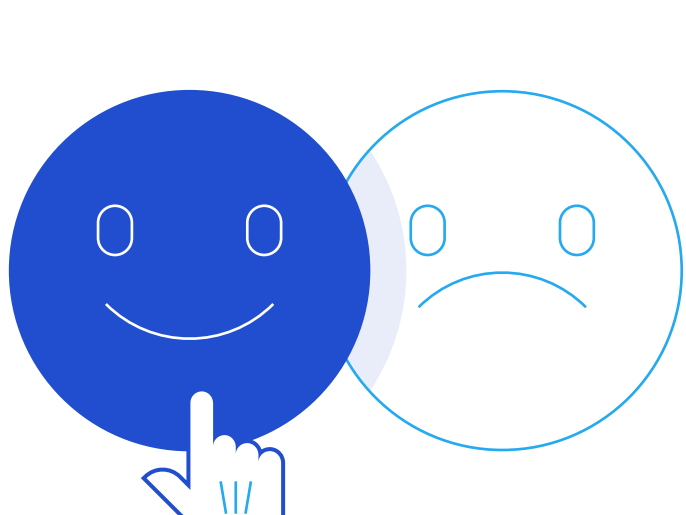
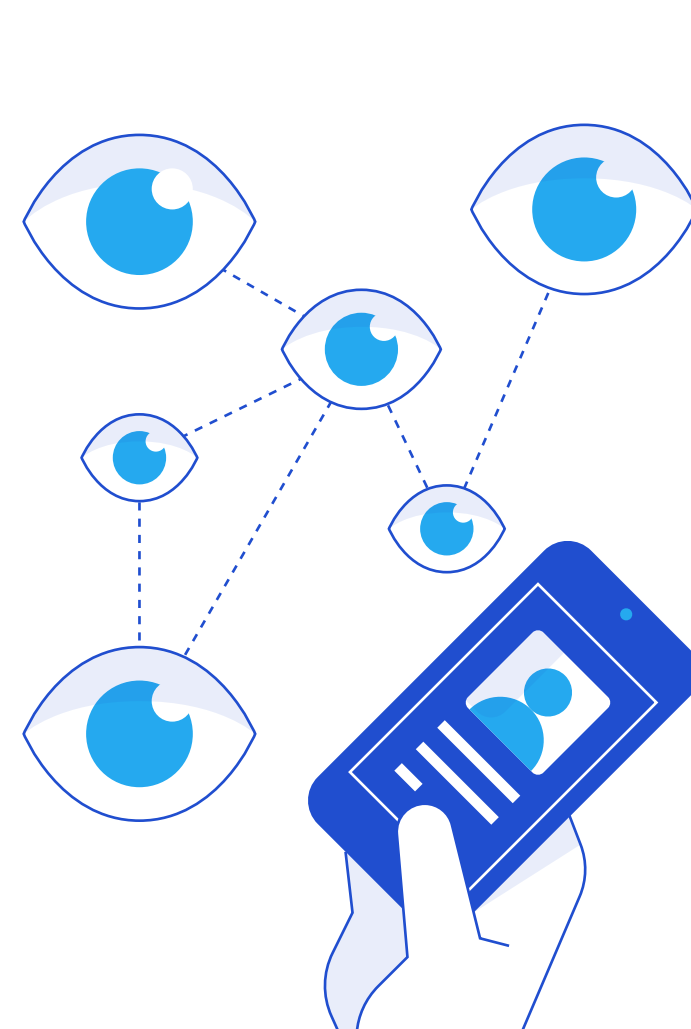
Present additional items as suggestions on the shopping cart page and allow them to be easily added to the order before final checkout.

## Privacy Deception

Privacy deception involves tricking people into sharing more information than they intend to. For example, a company may request personal information under the guise of improving the customer experience—while neglecting to disclose all the ways that information will be used.

### Instead

Be transparent about what information you need or want from customers.



## Confirm Shaming

Confirm shaming attempts to use guilt as a way to make customers comply. For example, phrasing the option to unsubscribe from a discounts mailing list as "No, I REALLY hate saving money."

### Instead

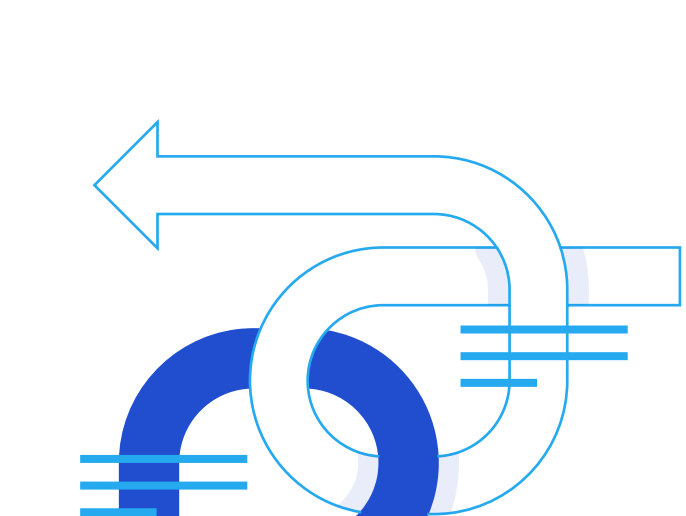
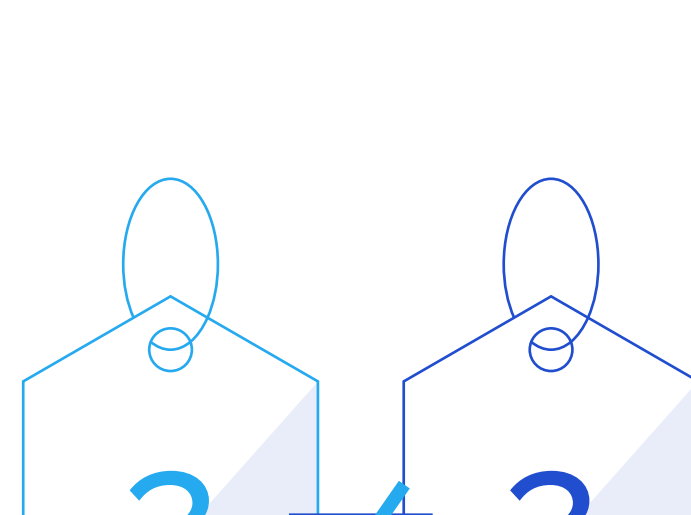
While the goal of this type of copy is to be funny and snarky, it can seem condescending and offend some customers. Matter-of-fact language, such as "You have been unsubscribed," will suffice.

## Price Comparison Prevention

This is the act of preventing customers from being able to compare prices, making it difficult for them to make informed decisions. For example, forcing a customer to add an item to their shopping cart to see the cost, leaving them vulnerable to accidentally purchasing it later if they forget to remove it.

### Instead

Show the benefits of plans and services, and make pricing transparent. Hiding prices will inevitably make customers unhappy.



## Trick Questions and Ambiguity

Deceptive website copy is worded in a way to confuse customers into making decisions they don't want to make. For example, loading a sentence with double and triple negatives to obscure whether the right answer is yes or no.

### Instead

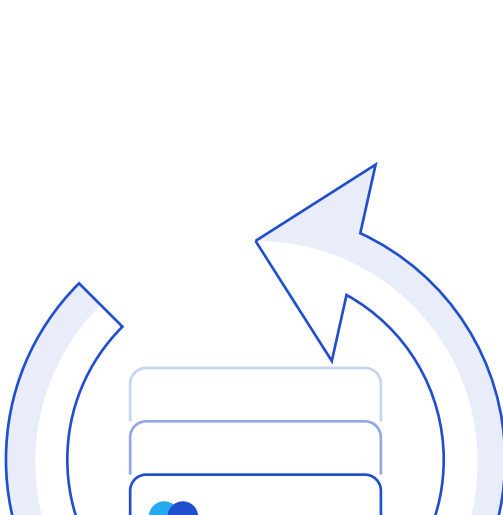
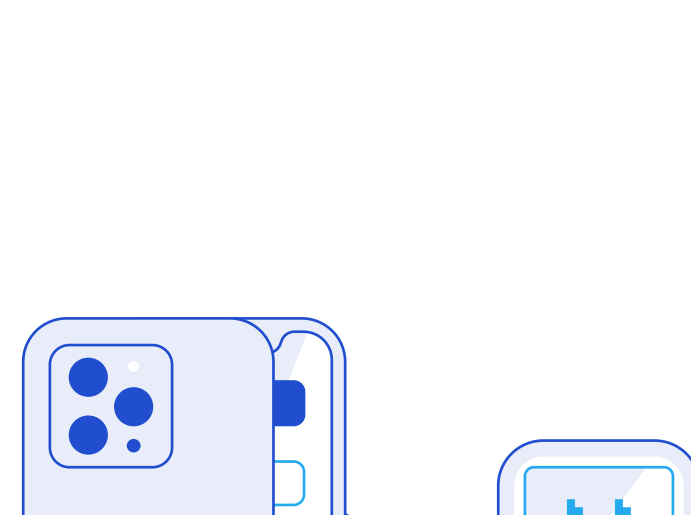
Write copy in plain, straightforward language.

## Bait-and-switch

Bait-and-switch is when a company presents one option to entice customers and then replaces it with something else of lower value or higher cost. An example is an advertisement depicting a discounted fully loaded smartphone that leads to a product page for a more basic option that costs extra to upgrade because the advertised model is "no longer available."

### Instead

Make interactions and offers lead to outcomes that customers expect. Be honest about product or service availability and features.



## Forced Continuity

Forced continuity is a common headache: Customers sign up for a free trial and are automatically charged once the trial ends, often without notice. This is often used in combination with the roach motel.

### Instead

Notify customers that their trials have expired and let them choose whether to continue subscribing. Don't renew the service until customers confirm their choice to continue.

