STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Customer Refund & Return Escalation Protocol

Document ID: SOP-OPS-042 **Effective Date:** October 2026 **Target Audience:** Tier 1 & Tier 2 Agents

1. AGENT GUIDANCE OVERVIEW

Use this operational playbook to evaluate eligibility, determine refund authorization limits, and execute resolutions. Do not quote operational instructions directly to customers; use the approved scripts provided in Section 4.

2. MATRIX: AGENT AUTHORIZATION THRESHOLDS

Support Level	Max Limit	Allowed Actions
Tier 1 Agent	Up to $50.00	Full/partial refund to original payment method, store credit issuance, prepaid return label generation.
Tier 2 Lead	Up to $250.00	Waiving return fees, handling out-of-policy exceptions, processing refunds for lost-in-transit claims.
Operations Manager	Above $250.00	Manual bank transfers, override system locks, legal/fraud claim resolutions.

3. STANDARD ELIGIBILITY & WORKFLOWS

General Policy Rules:

- **Return Window:** Within 30 days of the delivery timestamp.
- **Condition:** Unused, undamaged, in original packaging with tags attached.
- **Proof of Purchase:** A valid order number, receipt, or purchase confirmation email is required before any refund is processed. Do not process a refund based on a name-and-email lookup alone, even if an order is found that way.
- **Non-Refundable Categories:** Digital downloads, customized/personalized items, gift cards, items marked "Final Sale".
- **Merchant Error (Defect / Wrong Item):** Full refund including shipping fees; immediately issue a prepaid shipping label.
- **Buyer’s Remorse:** Full refund minus a $5.99 return label fee; shipping fee is non-refundable.

Standard Workflows:

1. In-Policy Request: Verify delivery date, proof of purchase, and non-refundable exclusions → Generate prepaid label → Advise customer of 5–7 business days processing window upon warehouse receipt.
2. Damaged/Defective Items (≤ 30 Days): Photo or video evidence is required before any refund or replacement is processed. Do not issue a refund or replacement if the customer does not provide it. If evidence is provided and order value < $25, process immediate refund/replacement under Damage-in-Place Protocol (no return required). If evidence is provided and order value > $25, issue a prepaid label for inspection prior to refund.
3. Out-of-Policy Escalations (31–60 Days): Tier 1 offers 100% Store Credit. If cash refund is demanded, escalate to Tier 2 with tag #out_of_policy_escalation.

4. APPROVED CUSTOMER SCRIPTS

STANDARD IN-POLICY REFUND

"I've reviewed your order and confirmed proof of purchase, and you're within our 30-day return window. I have generated a return shipping label and sent it to your email. Once our warehouse receives and inspects the item, your refund will post to your original payment method in 5–7 business days."

OUT-OF-POLICY (STORE CREDIT ALTERNATIVE)

"While your purchase falls outside our standard 30-day cash refund window, I'd still like to help. I can issue you a full credit for the amount paid, which you can use anytime on our site. Would you like me to set that up for you?"

DAMAGED ITEM (IMMEDIATE RESOLUTION)

"I am so sorry to hear that your item arrived damaged! Thank you for sharing those photos. I have processed a full refund back to your original payment method—there is no need to mail the damaged item back to us. You should see those funds reflected on your statement within 3–5 business days."