



Information sheet

Lack of proof of ownership

If you don't have sufficient proof of ownership of something you have lost or had stolen, your insurer can decline your claim. Read this guide to find out what you need to do to avoid problems.

What is proof of ownership?

When you make a claim for lost, stolen or damaged items, your insurer may require you to prove you are the owner of the items. This is a policy obligation known as "proof of ownership".

Why is it an issue for consumers?

If you do not provide sufficient proof of ownership to support a claim, your insurer may decline the claim. It is important you understand your policy obligations and keep appropriate evidence of ownership, in case you need to make a claim in the future.

Things to know about proof of ownership

When an insurer will require proof of ownership

Your policy will outline when you need to provide proof of ownership - usually it is when you make a claim. Your insurer will tell you when it requires proof of ownership for your claim and the type of proof that it requires.

The insurer's requirements will depend on the circumstances of the claim and the items claimed.

Examples of proof of ownership policy requirements

Generally, house, contents and travel policies will contain a specific obligation about proof of ownership. This will include:

- Details of when you need to provide proof of ownership
- The type of information that it expects you to provide
- What will happen if you do not meet this obligation.

Different insurance policies will contain different wordings. It is important you understand your policy wording and the requirements that apply to you. If you are unsure of what is required, talk to your insurer and it can provide more information.

How to prove ownership of claimed items

The type of proof that is required depends on the circumstances of the claim and the items that have been lost, stolen or damaged. Your insurer will be able to provide details of the information it requires from you.

The type of proof that you may be required to provide includes:

- Receipts of purchases
- Bank statements showing the purchase of the items
- Valuations of jewellery or high value items
- Warranties
- Photographs or videos of the items.

What if I've tried my best to find proof of ownership but it is not available?

If you do not have proof of ownership available, tell your insurer the reasons why. Your insurer will then make a decision about how this will affect your claim. If you do not meet your proof of ownership obligations under the policy, your insurer may decline your claim.

The IFSO Scheme expects that insurers will make reasonable requests for proof of ownership. If there is a dispute about whether the proof of ownership you have provided is reasonable, the IFSO Scheme may be able to investigate this, for free.

My claim has been declined – what do I do now?

You are able to request a review of the claim decision through your insurer's internal complaints process. If you are unhappy with the complaint response, you can ask the IFSO Scheme to investigate your complaint, for free.

Tips to avoid problems

Read your policy

Read your insurance policy and make sure you understand the proof of ownership requirements that apply.

Keep records of your purchases

There are a range of ways to keep a record of your purchases:

- Keep your receipts when you purchase items, or take a photo and save this digitally
- Don't delete your online purchase email confirmations
- Ensure you have access to historical bank statements – this can be by keeping a physical copy, accessing them digitally, or requesting them as needed from your bank.

Take photographs of your items

For gifts and important items (like furniture and appliances), it is a good idea to keep an up-to-date photographic record. Photographs are a good way to prove that certain items existed. However, it does not usually provide conclusive proof of ownership and your insurer may ask for additional information.

Obtain regular valuations

For high value items such as jewellery, obtain regular valuations and keep these valuations in a safe place.

Real life examples

Vera's* declined jewellery claim

Vera made a claim for stolen jewellery that a post-loss report said was worth \$57,000. The insurer requested proof of ownership and Vera provided one photograph of herself wearing the jewellery. The photograph was not sufficient proof of ownership and the insurer decided to make an offer to Vera of \$27,000, due to the lack of ownership information. The IFSO Scheme said this was a fair and reasonable outcome to the claim.

Pania's* fake photo

Pania made a claim for a ring and iPhone she said fell into the water while on holiday in Fiji. The insurer requested proof of ownership and Pania provided one photograph of the ring. However, this photograph was shown to be false and from an American wedding website. The insurer declined the claim because Pania had not provided proof of ownership (and she made a fraudulent claim).

*Names have been changed