Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Product Return and Exchange Procedures

This SOP details the **product return and exchange procedures**, covering eligibility criteria, return authorization process, packaging and shipping instructions, inspection and approval of returned items, refund and replacement policies, documentation and record-keeping, customer communication guidelines, and handling of defective or damaged products. The goal is to provide a clear, efficient, and customer-friendly process for managing product returns and exchanges while minimizing losses and ensuring customer satisfaction.

1. Eligibility Criteria

1. Products may be returned/exchanged within **30 days** of receipt, unless otherwise specified.
2. Items must be **unused**, in original packaging, and with all accessories/manuals included.
3. Some items (e.g., perishable goods, personalized products) may be **non-returnable**; refer to the product category exceptions list.
4. Proof of purchase (order number, receipt) is mandatory for all returns/exchanges.

2. Return Authorization Process

1. Customer contacts support via email/phone/portal to initiate a return or exchange request.
2. Support team verifies eligibility and provides a **Return Authorization Number (RAN)** if approved.
3. Customer receives detailed instructions for proceeding with the return/exchange.

3. Packaging and Shipping Instructions

1. Customer must securely package the item(s), including all original materials.
2. The **Return Authorization Number** must be clearly labeled on the package.
3. Customer is responsible for shipping costs except in cases of defective/damaged products or company error.
4. Provide customer with the company's return address and any required carrier instructions.

4. Inspection and Approval of Returned Items

1. Upon receipt, the returns team inspects items within **3 business days** for condition and eligibility.
2. If condition and eligibility criteria are met, approval is granted for refund or exchange.
3. If not approved, the customer is notified with reasons and options (e.g., return shipment at customer's expense).

5. Refund and Replacement Policies

1. Approved refunds are processed to the original payment method within **5 business days** of approval.
2. Exchanges/replacements for approved cases are shipped within **5 business days**.
3. **Non-refundable items:**
   - Items not in original condition
   - Requests outside eligible timeframe
   - Non-returnable product categories

6. Documentation and Record-Keeping

1. All return/exchange requests must be logged in the company system with supporting documentation.
2. Maintain records of:
   - Customer information and order details
   - Return Authorization Number
   - Date received, inspection notes, and resolution
3. Retain records for a minimum of **1 year** or as required by law.

7. Customer Communication Guidelines

1. Respond to all return/exchange inquiries within **1 business day**.

2. Communicate clearly and courteously at every step (initiation, approval, rejection, refund/exchange updates).
3. Provide proactive updates if processing times extend beyond the standard timeline.

8. Handling Defective or Damaged Products

1. If the item is defective or damaged, company arranges for free return shipping and immediate replacement/refund.
2. Request photos or descriptions for initial assessment when applicable.
3. Escalate complex cases to management or product quality teams for further analysis and resolution.

9. Review and Continuous Improvement

1. Regularly review the return and exchange process for efficiency and customer satisfaction.
2. Update this SOP as needed based on feedback and operational changes.