

Avoiding Romance Scams



Online dating also has become increasingly common. Chances are you know someone who has met their match through an online dating service. But meeting people online also poses a danger that the person on the other side of the screen may not be telling you the truth about who he or she is. Scammers commonly use fake profiles on social networking and online dating sites to find potential victims. Some of these stories have made national headlines and have even been made into movies.

If an online love interest starts asking you for money, it's probably a scam. Frequently, the person will claim to be living in another country, and will need you to wire money to them so they can buy a plane ticket to come meet you in person. In some instances, these scams have been known to go on for many months, even years, and each time the victim tries to meet their love interest in person there is some kind of emergency, plans change and they aren't able to come.

Find out as much as you can about the people you meet online. Scammers may have developed detailed, intricate back stories for the person they are portraying online, so check with independent sources to see if the person portrayed on your computer screen is real. Use a reverse-image search on the Internet to see if the picture you see on your screen is taken from a stock photo or copied from another website. If it is, chances are the person is not who they are claiming to be.

Be cautious meeting people in-person. Many criminals – not just scammers – prowl the Internet, including chat rooms and similar sites, and some intend more harm than just taking your money. If you meet somebody through a legitimate, reputable online dating site and decide to meet up in person, be cautious. Follow the reputable site's safety recommendations, and be sure to meet in a public place where there are plenty of people around to offer help in case of an emergency.

Never wire money to persons you meet online. Remember, crooks and fraudsters are as old as human nature itself. Only the medium of communication, and the methods of immediate payment, are new. As we often remind people, never wire money to someone you do not know, no matter how legitimate their story may seem. When money is sent through a wire service, it is difficult to track and nearly impossible to get back.

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