

Online Dating Scams

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How do they work?

Scammers can target both male and female victims. They do this by making fake dating profiles with stolen or edited images of other people. They build relationships with their victims online before convincing them to send them money - this may be through a made up story, trying to extort their victims through information or pictures they sent, to pay for travel purposes, etc.

Many scammers are very good at creating fake stories and identities. They are very good at manipulating people and may genuinely come across as caring and believable. Eventually, they will ask for money in a believable way (plane tickets to meet, an emergency, etc.) and then they stop contacting the victim and disappear.

What are the signs to look for?

- **Check the profile out thoroughly**
 - Reverse-image search any photos to see if they belong to anyone else, search for their name or profile on other social media accounts, etc.
- **Is the individual "too perfect"?**
- **The individual tries to move the conversation to a different platform quickly**
 - Many dating sites have policies in place to protect their users from seeing or doing anything inappropriate. They may also keep logs of chats that staff can review if a user reports something is wrong. By moving it off the platform, potential victims may lose those safety nets.
- **The individual requests inappropriate photos or information**
 - They may request or demand victims send things that could later be used for extortion.
- **The individual never does any live calls/video calls, never wants to meet in-person, etc.**
- **The individual requests financial information or money**

What can you do?

When using online dating apps, be aware this could happen to you.

Be careful what you post online and what you tell or send to others. **Don't send money to anyone online you don't explicitly trust** (never wire money, put money on a prepaid card, or send cash to an online love interest, there is a very high chance you will not get it back).

If you haven't been targeted in this type of scam, the best thing you can do is be aware of it and to **pass the information on!** That way more people are aware of how this scam works and do not become victims themselves.



How to Report the Scam

If you come across a scam, please report it to the Federal Trade Commission. Your complaint will help investigators identify the people responsible and prevent them from targeting others.

- **Report by calling the FTC at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357) or TTY 1-866-653-4261**
- **Report by filing a complaint online at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint)**

