

What Is a Romance Scam?



FTC : Federal Trade Commission
Consumer Advice

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- you meet someone special on a dating website or app. Soon they want to email, call, or message you off the platform. They say it's true love, but they live far away — maybe for work or because they're in the military. Then they start asking for money. Maybe it's for a plane ticket to visit you. Or emergency surgery. Or something else urgent.
- Romance scammers create fake profiles on dating sites and apps or contact you through popular social media sites like Instagram or Facebook. The scammers strike up a relationship with you to build up trust, sometimes talking or chatting several times a day. Then, they make up a story and ask for money.

The Lies Romance Scammers Tell

- Romance scammers adjust their stories to what they think will work in each situation.
- **Scammers say they can't meet you in person.** They might say they're living or traveling outside the country, working on an oil rig, in the military, or working with an international organization.
- **Scammers will ask you for money.** Once they gain your trust, they'll ask for your help to pay medical expenses (for them or a family member), buy their ticket to visit you, pay for their visa, or help them pay fees to get them out of trouble. They may even offer to help you get started in cryptocurrency investing.

The Lies Romance Scammers Tell

- **Scammers will tell you how to pay.** All scammers, not just romance scammers, want to get your money quickly. And they want your money in a way that makes it hard for you to get it back. They'll tell you to wire money through a company like Western Union or MoneyGram, put money on gift cards (like Amazon, Google Play, iTunes, or Steam), and give them the PIN codes, send money through a money transfer app, or transfer cryptocurrency.

How to Avoid Losing Money to a Romance Scammer

- Here's the bottom line: **Never send money or gifts to a sweetheart you haven't met in person.**
- If you suspect a romance scam:
- Stop communicating with the person immediately.
- Talk to someone you trust. Do your friends or family say they're concerned about your new love interest?
- Search online for the type of job the person has plus the word "scammer." Have other people posted similar stories? For example, search for "oil rig scammer" or "US Army scammer."
- Do a reverse image search of the person's profile picture. Is it associated with another name or with details that don't match up? Those are signs of a scam.

What to do if you or someone that you know have been scammed ?

- You can go to:
ReportFraud.ftc.gov
- Your report is shared with more than 2,800 law enforcers.
- FTC can't resolve your report but will use reports to investigate and bring cases against fraud, scams, and bad business practices.

