

## Start With Trust<sup>®</sup> Online

# Tips for avoiding online fraud

*Start With Trust Online, the 2022 BBB<sup>®</sup> Online Scams report*, takes a closer look at scams that are perpetrated online, including impersonation and online purchase scams, to glean new information to help consumers protect themselves from online fraud.



### Online scams

Scams that started either via an online means of contact (e.g., website, social media, email, internet messaging, online classifieds) or that ended up online after starting offline (e.g., phone call, in-person, postal mail).



### Impersonation scams

A scammer pretends to be a well-known organization or person to steal sensitive data or money.



### Online purchase scams

Online shopping scams typically involve the purchase of products and/or services where the transaction occurs via a website or other online means.

## Research highlights\*

### ALL SCAMS PERPETRATED ONLINE

So far in 2022, **75%** of all scams reported with a monetary loss were perpetrated via **online means**.

**Online scams** reported to BBB Scam Tracker **rose 87%** between 2015/2016 and 2021/2022.

Scams perpetrated via **text message** continue to be risky with an **\$800 median dollar loss** so far in 2022.

**About 70%** of respondents said they **continued the online engagement to gain something**, compared to 30% who said they continued because they feared losing something.

### IMPERSONATION SCAMS

**Impersonating** a well-known person or organization was by far the **most reported tactic** used by scammers (54%).

**People who lost money** to a scam were almost twice as likely as those who did not lose money to **say the scammer used impersonation** as a tactic.

### ONLINE PURCHASE SCAMS

**Online purchase scams** continued to be the **most reported scam type** to BBB Scam Tracker in 2022, making up 30% of all scams reported.

**Ages 18-24** reported the **highest median dollar loss** for online purchase scams so far in 2022, up almost 26% from 2021.

\* This research is based on two sets of data: 1) An analysis of more than 300,000 reports submitted to BBB Scam Tracker<sup>SM</sup> between 2015 and 2022, and 2) survey research conducted in 2022.

# How to protect yourself from online scams

How and where you search, research, and conduct transactions may impact your susceptibility to online scams.

1

**If the deal looks too good to be true, it probably is.** Price was the top motivating factor for people who made a purchase and then lost money. Don't shop on price alone.

2

**Be careful purchasing sought-after products.**

Scammers offer hard-to-find items and highly sought-after products at great prices.



3

**Before you buy, do your research with a trustworthy source.** Take time to verify the offer and avoid making snap buying decisions.

4

**Avoid making quick purchases while on social media.** Twenty-five percent of survey respondents reported being targeted while browsing social media.

5

**Use secure and traceable transactions.** Avoid paying by wire transfer, prepaid money card, gift card, or other non-traditional payment methods.



6

**Choose your online payment system carefully.** Take some time to understand the rules around your online payment system; not all will reimburse money if you get scammed.

7

**Don't believe everything you see.**

Scammers are great at mimicking official seals, fonts, and other details. Just because a website or email looks official does not mean it is. For example, if a business displays a BBB Accredited Business Seal, you can verify its legitimacy by going to **BBB.org** and looking up the company yourself.

8

**Ask for verification and take time to do research with a trustworthy source.** People who lost money to a scam were almost twice as likely as those who avoided losing money to say the scammer used impersonation as a tactic.



9

**Be skeptical about anyone who reaches out to you unsolicited.** Survey respondents told us scammers produced fake business cards, websites, credentials, ratings and more to convince them they were legitimate.

