

Online Romance & Dating Scams

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It's February and Valentine's Day is right around the corner.

Almost a third of Americans said they used an online dating service or app according to a recent Pew survey ¹, and 10% of people in a relationship said that they met their partner online. These stats are even higher for younger people.

Unfortunately, though, all this online romance creates opportunities for scammers. Ick!

What is a Romance Scam?

Romance scams (also called sweetheart scams), refers to scams involving online dating.

Essentially, a bad actor creates a fake online profile, fires up the charm, and attempts to stir up romantic feelings in potential victims—especially students. After some not-so-innocent flirtation, eventually, the scammer asks for money.

Pay Attention to Red Flags

Romance scammers try to be as convincing as possible, which can now include using artificial intelligence-powered deep-fake video or audio technology. Still, many cybercriminals follow a similar scam pattern. Look out for some red flags when cybersurfing for love. The person:

- Requests money for urgent matters, such as medical expenses or a plane ticket to see you. Never send money to someone you haven't met in person.
- Requests hard-to-track forms of payment, like pre-loaded gift cards.
- Claims to live far away from you, often in a foreign country. They might also say they are in the military and serving overseas.
- Breaks promises to see you in person.
- Wants to push the conversation from the dating app to other messaging platforms like WhatsApp, Signal, or Telegram.
- The relationship feels like it is moving very fast.

Break up with Scammers

If you suspect you or a loved one are the victim of a romance scam, take action:

- Immediately stop communicating with the scammer.
- Not any identifiable information you may have on them, such as their email address or phone number. Take screenshots and write down any contact information.
- Contact your bank or credit card company if you've been scammed out of money.
- File a report with [Campus Police](#).
- Report the scam to the FTC ([Federal Trade Commission](#)) and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) [Internet Crime Complaint Center \(IC3\)](#).
- Alert the website, platform, or app where you met the scammer. They might have more information on the scammer that can help investigators.

Did You Know?

Americans reported losing a heartbreaking **\$1.3 billion** to romance scams in 2022, according to the Federal Trade Commission ², and the number is likely higher due to underreporting.

Safeguard Your Heart (and Wallet) From Scammers

By adopting a few privacy habits, you can limit what scammers can learn about you.

Share with Care

Think before posting about yourself and others on social media or online dating services. Consider what a post reveals and who can see it.

Check Your Settings

Consider setting your social media profiles to “private”. This makes it harder for scammers to target and communicate with you.

Think Before You Click

Be wary of messages that push you for immediate action or ask for personal information.

This is a red flag for phishing. Never share personal info via email or text if you do not know the sender.

Use Reverse Image Search

Do a reverse image search of the flirty account’s profile picture.

You may see that image belongs to a completely different person, or has been affiliated with different online identities. If this is the case, there is a high chance the person behind the fake profile picture is trying to scam you.

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