

# Holiday Scams to Watch Out for This Season

The holiday season is a time for celebrating with those closest to you, but it's also prime time for holiday scams. Unfortunately, fraudsters ramp up their efforts at this time of year to exploit holiday cheer for financial gain, so it's important to stay alert and protect yourself from falling victim to a scam.

Here are some of the more common holiday scams to watch out for.

## Porch piracy

The popularity of online shopping has resulted in an increase in package theft. The good news is that you can take steps to help prevent porch piracy by installing surveillance systems, monitoring delivery progress (e.g., online tracking or photo proof of delivery), and/or arranging for secure delivery.

## Gift card fraud

Gift cards can typically be found on holiday wish lists, but unfortunately they are also popular with scam artists. Whether you are giving or receiving a gift card, you should always inspect it for signs of tampering and make sure that the barcode on the back matches the one on the packaging. In addition, you should only purchase or use gift cards from trusted retailers and reputable websites and always keep a copy of the gift card receipt.

## Scam websites

Scam websites selling fake or nonexistent products often try to trick online shoppers by using website addresses and logos that are similar to popular brand or store names. To help you determine whether an online retailer is reputable, research sites before you shop and read reviews from past customers. Look for <https://> in the website address and not just <http://>, since the "s" indicates a secure connection.

## Phishing emails/texts and phony delivery/order notifications

Beware of emails or texts that contain links or ask for personal information. Legitimate shopping websites will never email or text you at random and ask for your personal information. In addition, watch out for fake emails or texts disguised as package delivery or order notifications. Make sure that all delivery emails or texts are from reputable delivery companies that you recognize.

## Protecting yourself from scams

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to help protect yourself from scams:

- Don't click on suspicious or unfamiliar links or attachments in emails, text messages, and instant messaging services.
- Never share personal or financial information via email, text message, or over the phone.
- Keep your device and security software up to date, maintain strong passwords, and use multi-factor authentication.
- Use credit cards instead of debit cards (since credit cards generally have better protection than debit cards against fraudulent charges) and/or consider using a mobile payment service, which doesn't require you to give your credit card information directly to a merchant.
- Regularly monitor your bank and credit card statements for unauthorized transactions.



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