

## Fending off Financial Scams

While most merchants are honest people trying to earn an honest living, there are plenty of con artists and swindlers in the world masquerading as legitimate business people. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to tell them apart.

To describe all of the different swindles consumers are subjected to would be a monumental task. Many of these con games have been run for years, although they undergo subtle variations from time to time as con artists keep them modern. New scams seem to spring up every day, as fast buck artists and fly-by-night operators exercise their creativity in devising ways to separate you from your money.

According to the National Fraud Information Center, con artists target certain individuals because they share some common characteristics:

- › Trusting too easily and are not skeptical enough
- › Letting greed overcome sound judgment
- › Believing something is true just because it's in print or on television
- › Being easily pressured or intimidated

To avoid being fleeced by a consumer scam, ask yourself the following questions before you invest any money in a product, service or investment:

- › Is it reasonable for a company to sell the product I am being promised at the advertised price?
- › What do I know about the person or company making this offer?
- › If this deal is so terrific, why is it being offered to me?

Remember that scam operators rely on their victims' gullibility and later embarrassment at being fleeced to protect them from the law. If a con artist has victimized you, you will do yourself and your neighbors a favor by reporting the problem to the police or other law enforcement authorities.

### Additional Information

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