

ROMANCE SCAMS

Scammers are increasingly becoming more and more ruthless in trying to fleece money out of unsuspecting victims.

Internet dating sites and chat rooms are becoming popular as many singles find them to be an easy way of meeting people. Unfortunately scammers will target people when they are vulnerable to win their trust and their money. Some people will let their hearts rule their head and will fall victim to these clever scammers by falling for their charm and empty promises.

By posing as singles looking for love in online chat rooms and dating sites, scammers will comb these sites looking for vulnerable singles to prey on. Often they will take weeks, months, or sometimes years to cultivate a relationship with the victim to gain their trust before asking for money or help.

Not only are these ruthless scammers looking for money but they may also be trying to steal your personal information. These scammers are experts at deceiving people with victims from all walks of life falling for their deceit. They will go to great lengths to gain your interest and trust and will often share 'personal information', use loving words and may even send you gifts. Once they are sure they have your trust, they will claim they have a sick family member who requires an expensive operation or may indicate they have been robbed or their business has failed. This is their cue to ask you for money or rely on your sympathy to offer the money to them. Don't be sucked in, make sure you are fully aware of the danger of potentially losing your life savings.

Whilst there are many legitimate people looking for love, always be aware of the dangers of being taken in by a scammer.

Here are some tips to avoid falling victim to a romance scam:

- Don't share your anonymity and personal information until you are comfortable with the person. Ask lots of questions, trust your instincts if you have any doubts, be cautious and be selective before providing such information.
- Be wary of emails from overseas-based singles, particularly if they start confessing their love for you within weeks of emailing you despite never having met you.
- Watch out for personal photographs that are "too good to be true" or the information they provide doesn't match their photo or Facebook page.

- Be cautious of singles asking too many questions about your financial status. Keep the topics to hobbies and interests.
- Be very wary if they start mentioning a financial difficulty or needing financial assistance. Never send money, particularly by wire transfer. If you are using a legitimate dating site and feel uncomfortable about the person, report it to the site.
- Be wary if they constantly use excuses as to why they cannot travel to meet you and always need more money.

If you think you have been scammed and have lost money or personal details, it is unlikely your money can be recovered but there are some steps you can take to protect yourself and limit the damage.

- Contact your bank or financial institution
- Report the scam to the relevant [authorities](#) e.g. ACORN, local Police etc.
- Recover your identity by contacting [iDcare](#) or call 1300 432 273 or by contacting the [Victims of Commonwealth Identity Crime](#) who may provide a certificate that can be helpful in restoring your identity
- Change your online passwords
- Alert others to the scam
- Avoid other scams by following the tips on [Stay Smart Online](#) or [Scamwatch](#)

For more information contact NT Consumer Affairs on 1800 019 319 or consumer@nt.gov.au or to view this page online go to www.consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au