



06/09/2023: Don't Get Check-mated: Beware of Popular Check Scams

In today's digital age, scammers are constantly devising new ways to trick unsuspecting individuals out of their hard-earned money. While most consumers are focusing their fraud education on staying safe in the cyber world, scammers are busy recycling old tricks to use with a new spin. Several of these prevalent methods involve fraudulent checks. To help you stay one step ahead of these scammers, we've put together a list of popular check scams to watch out for. Stay informed, exercise caution, and keep these tips in mind to protect yourself from financial fraud. If you have questions or concerns about a check you receive, don't hesitate to reach out to your financial institution. **We're here to help!**

- **Job Scams:** Scammers may pose as potential employers and send you a check as an advance payment, to cover work-related expenses, or even to make donations on their behalf. They might ask you to deposit the check, deduct your payment, and send the remainder back. In most cases, these checks are counterfeit, and once the check is returned, you'll be held responsible for the withdrawn funds.
 - Research the company and job offer thoroughly before accepting any checks. Verify the legitimacy of the company by contacting them directly by using only information from their official website.
 - Be skeptical of any employer who asks you to deposit a check immediately without proper documentation or a formal hiring process.
 - Never use a check you receive from an employer to purchase gift cards. Often in these instances the position is for a personal assistant, and you're told that the gift cards are for a donation on the employer's behalf. **It's a SCAM!** In these instances, the bad guy makes off with the gift cards while you're left footing the bill.
- **Overpayment Scams:** These scams are often associated with online marketplace transactions. In this scam, a buyer or "client" sends you a check for an amount higher than the agreed-upon price, often citing a mistake or requesting a refund. They'll urge you to deposit the check and send back the excess amount. However, the original check is fraudulent, and you'll be left responsible for the bounced check.
 - Be cautious when dealing with unknown individuals or sellers offering to overpay for goods or services.
 - Insist on using secure payment methods with buyer protection, like well-known online payment platforms.
 - If a deal seems too good to be true or raises any suspicions, trust your instincts, and walk away.
- **Grant Scams:** Scammers may contact individuals claiming they've been awarded a grant or government funding. To receive the funds, they'll ask for your personal information and request that you deposit a check they'll send to cover processing fees or taxes. The check is counterfeit, and you'll be left with a loss as well as possible identity theft.
 - Remember that legitimate grants typically don't require upfront payment; nor do they ask for sensitive personal information over the phone, email, or other messaging services.
 - Verify the legitimacy of the grant offer by contacting the organization directly using only information from their official website.
 - Never deposit a check that's sent to you to cover fees or taxes for a grant or any other financial award.
- **Prize Scams:** In prize scams, scammers inform you that you've won a substantial amount of money, or an amazing prize like a new car. They'll send you a check and ask that you use it to cover taxes, processing fees, or other expenses before you receive your winnings. The check is bogus, and you'll be left empty-handed and out of pocket.
 - Be cautious if you're notified of winning a prize without entering any contests or sweepstakes. You can't win if you don't play.
 - Legitimate prize winnings won't require you to provide personal information or pay upfront fees.
 - Consult reputable sources or contact the supposed prize provider independently to verify the authenticity of the prize offer.