

# Tips on Protecting Yourself From Con Artists

Con artists steal your money by gaining your confidence. They use three primary ways to find their victims: by phone, mail, and door-to-door sales. Victims of telemarketing fraud alone lost over \$40 BILLION last year. Most of the victims are educated people – this tells us that con artists are VERY good at what they do.

## Con artists most often use these stories (or “pitches”) to gain your confidence...

- ❌ **You are a sweepstakes winner! How exciting!**
- ❌ **Enter this fabulous foreign lottery!** Besides being scams, international lotteries are illegal. If you are suspicious about an item mailed to you, reseal it and write on the outside “Forward to Postal Inspector” and put it back into the mail.
- ❌ **Any extreme offer, claim or promise.** You have heard it before - if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! No matter HOW tempting, don't bite the bait!
- ❌ **Their promise that they can help you get your money back from shady telemarketers.** In many cases, the caller works for the same company that ripped you off in the first place.
- ❌ **Plea to participate in a survey, study or investigation that includes you giving them personal information.** This is a clue to hang up!
- ❌ **Special one-day, “I'm in your neighborhood” type of door-to-door home repair or contractor stories:** No doubt the stranger will identify some “urgent” repair he / she noticed, or, appear to be doing you a big favor by offering the service. Just say “no.” But, if you wonder about the kind of repair they say you needed, ask a friend or relative for advice.
- ❌ **Claims that the Government owes you money because of a new law.** The latest scams involve the “Slave Reparation Act” and “notch babies” born between 1917 and 1926. To participate in the \$5,000 settlement, submit personal documents to the “National Victim Register.”
- ❌ **Claims that your donations will support lobbying efforts to enact the same laws mentioned above.**
- ❌ **Limited, special offers that requires you to act immediately.**
- ❌ **Solicitations to donate to a charitable cause.** Con artists are really good at designing messages that grab your heartstrings. Charitable solicitations around the holidays and after disasters can be most compelling. The best protection against these calls is to set up a two-step ‘giving plan’: 1) Decide ahead of time which charity will receive your financial support, and 2) Stick to that plan! Note that professional fund raising groups often take a large percentage of your donation.

## Con artists want you to...

- ➡ **Get excited** - they do this by sounding REALLY excited you “won”!
- ➡ **Send money or buy something to enter a sweepstakes or collect a prize.**

- ➔ **Wire money or use a courier service they are sending to you** -These take-your-money-and-run tactics are hallmarks of companies trying to evade authorities!
- ➔ **Feel pressured to buy** - they do this by not taking "no" for an answer.
- ➔ **Give them personal information** - Always guard your personal information such as Social Security, Medicare, health insurance or credit card numbers. No matter how legitimate a reason they say they have to ask, say no thanks.
- ➔ **Not notice that they are using sound-alike, look-alike name or symbol** as a way to gain your confidence and buy a product or donate to a charity.
- ➔ **Pay in advance of receiving services** (in full or in part).
- ➔ **Feel the situation is urgent** - so you will buy a product or sign an agreement / contract.

### General tips. What we know...

- ➔ Con artists use language and schemes designed to by-pass the brain (and reason) and hook into their victim's heart, emotions, and greed.
- ➔ The longer you engage in the con artists conversation, the more vulnerable you will become.
- ➔ *If anyone phones you wanting you to spend your money (product, service, charity) using your credit card or bank number, hang up.*
- ➔ If anyone contacts you with a door-to-door solicitation, it's wise not to "bite the bait." At worst, think about their pitch over night or even ask a friend or relative for advice.
- ➔ Never purchase a service or product over the phone unless you did the dialing and checked out the company ahead of time.

