

4 ways to protect yourself against advanced fee and prepayment scams



When you're reading through your daily emails, you most likely check the spam folder, deleting the strange and unwanted items from your inbox. But what happens when one slips through the cracks? Perhaps it's from a phony loan company, with emails, websites and documents that appear to be legitimate. Their offer sounds almost too good to be true, but you decide to test it out.

Unfortunately, thieves posing as authentic companies are luring victims every day into paying fees in anticipation of receiving something of greater value, like a loan, credit card, grant, investment or inheritance money. The victim sends money to the scammer using a money transfer service, but then receives nothing in return. These loans, credit cards, grants, investments or inheritance sums never actually existed. And once the scammers get their money, they are never heard from again. These types of advanced fee or prepayment scams often prey on those who are struggling financially, but that doesn't mean they can't happen to anyone.

Phony offers don't just come through email and over the Internet; you might receive a letter in the mail offering you an opportunity. Another prominent scam may be initiated by someone claiming to be a person of importance in a foreign country who needs your assistance in accessing funds in their country, tricking consumers into thinking their request is legitimate. The fraudsters are very convincing.

To help you stay informed and make smart decisions, [Western Union](#) offers tips to help you protect yourself against advanced fee or prepayment scams:

Never send money to someone you haven't met in person. Make sure you know exactly who you're dealing with when using a money transfer service. While money transfer is a great way to send money to family and friends, it should not be used for sending money in advance for a credit card or loan fee. If you've never heard of the company or person contacting you, do a little research to learn more about them. If possible, plan a visit to the business location or consult the Better Business Bureau. If you have significant concerns, contact your Attorney General's Office or your local law enforcement officials.

You should never have to send money in advance to obtain a loan or credit card. Keep in mind: if an offer appears too good to be true, it most likely is. You should not pay money to someone for a promise or in anticipation of receiving something of greater value. If you receive a suspicious email that mentions a money transfer organization, be sure to notify the organization and report the

email right away. If someone contacted you through email asking you to send them money via Western Union, forward the email to: spoof@westernunion.com.

Do not pay for an item or service with a money transfer to an individual. When purchasing an item on the internet, be sure you're using a secure payment method. It's never a good idea to send money to an individual to pay for an internet item or service via money transfer. When sending money in any case, you should be aware of exactly where it's headed.

Be suspicious of businesses without a verified street address. If the business you're dealing with operates out of a post office box or mail drop, you should be suspicious. Additionally, anyone without a direct telephone line or who is never available when you call is a red flag that should make you think twice.

Follow these tips to keep your money where it belongs: in your wallet. For more tips and information about consumer fraud awareness, visit: wu.com/fraudawareness. If you believe you may be a victim of fraud using Western Union, call the Western Union Fraud Hotline number at 1-800-448-1492.