



How to recognize and avoid phishing scams

Scammers use email or text messages to try to steal your passwords, account numbers, or Social Security numbers. If they get that information, they could get access to your email, bank, or other accounts. Or they could sell your information to other scammers. Scammers launch thousands of phishing attacks like these every day — and they're often successful.

To protect yourself, ask the following critical questions when interacting with email, text messages, phone calls, and even QR codes:

Who sent the communication? Only respond to someone you know or can easily validate.

What do they want? Require context before acting.

When are they expecting you to respond? Don't impulsively respond to urgent or irregular deadlines.

Where are the links trying to take you? Be cautious with links you aren't familiar with.

Why do you believe this is legitimate? Is this a communication you were expecting?

How are you going to react? Pause before taking any action. Don't forward emails to others.

If you are suspicious of an email and you have not interacted with any links or attachments, be cautious.

Things you can do if you suspect a phishing attack:

- If you think a scammer has your information, like your Social Security, credit card, or bank account number, go to [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov). There you'll see the specific steps to take.
- If you think you clicked on a link or opened an attachment that downloaded harmful software, [update your computer's security software](#). Then run a scan and remove anything it identifies as a problem.

Watch for the phish out there!!

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