

How to Avoid Scams Targeting College Students

When you are strapped for cash, any idea that will help you earn it may seem inviting. Scammers know this and target college students by running ads and posting flyers around campus with offers of "easy money for easy work." If you come across a job that offers fast cash, be sure to check out the employer thoroughly before signing on.

Thieves target college students with a variety of employment and identity-theft scams because they assume that most young people are new to managing their money and may not be keeping a watchful eye on their accounts. Protect yourself, and your bank account, from today's popular scams:

- **Mystery shopping.** Students receive emails or promotions for a website where they can register to become a secret shopper. Once signed up, they're then told they must pay a fee for more program information to continue the application process. Never pay money upfront for a job. Legitimate job offers will not require payment. If you are interested in this type of work, you can search through legitimate assignments at the Mystery Shopping Providers Association (MSPA) website at www.mysteryshop.org.
- **Address farming.** Thieves target large groups of students in this scam. They promise members of Greek organizations, and other types of clubs, discounted interest rates on credit cards or other services—all of which are bogus. In turn, scammers require group members to provide their addresses and personal information, enabling them to steal students' identities.
- **Buying books online scam.** Books are drastically discounted in this con. Thieves steal your credit card information when you submit your order online, and the books you order are never delivered. Remember to make online purchases only through a reputable, secured website.
- **Fake credit card applications.** Thieves mix in with representatives of legitimate credit card companies who are on campus handing out credit card applications. The thieves collect

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applications you've filled out, then steal your information so they can rip you off on your new credit card. Typically, they skim off your card slowly each month, relying on the fact that most students usually don't read their statements. You can avoid this scam by applying for a credit card only through a known entity such as your bank or credit union.

- Student loan and scholarship scams. Crooks ask students for an advance fee in order to secure their student loans. The requested amount can be 3 to 4 percent of the loan. Or, they make up a fee in order for students to apply for a scholarship. Don't fall for these scams. Legitimate student loan agencies and scholarship providers never ask for money upfront.

Remember not to give away your personal information to someone you don't know. Also, restrict your online shopping only to reputable businesses providing secure websites for transactions. In matters of employment, check out a potential employer by visiting the [Better Business Bureau](#) website to see if the organization has had complaints issued against it.

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