

How to spot romantic red flags in online dating

Romance scams are one of the most common—and most heartbreaking types of online fraud. Cyber criminals create fake profiles, build relationships that feel real over weeks or even months, and use emotional manipulation to gain trust. Their goal isn't to find love - it's to gain money and personal information. These scams can happen to anyone at any age. But learning the warning signs can help you stay safe.

Here's how to spot the red flags:

Love bombing

"Love bombing" might sound romantic, but it's actually a tactic used to build trust quickly through overwhelming affection and attention.

Look out for:

- Excessive compliments, flattery, and attention up front
- Declarations of love after just a couple of days or weeks
- Making future plans about your life together too quickly

Requests for money or gifts

Once they've earned your trust, they ask for favours, presents, or money.

Look out for:

- Urgent requests for money, gift cards, or cryptocurrency
- Someone making you feel guilty or unworthy if you don't send them what they ask for
- Someone asking for money or gifts before you've met in person

Making excuses to never meet

The person you're talking to is always "too busy" to meet you in person.

Look out for:

- Someone that always refuses to do video calls
- A person that never makes plans to see you in person or always comes up with excuses to never meet
- Someone whose pictures always seem blurry, pixelated, or inconsistent

Pressure to share personal details

Including images, passwords, banking details, and other information not required to get to know someone romantically.

Look out for:

- Requests for private photos (they may be doing this to exploit or extort you)
- Asking for information outside of the norms of dating (like your SIN, passwords, or banking or credit card details)

Sob stories and emergencies

The only time they open up is to inform you of a crisis or something urgent.

Look out for:

- Dramatic emergencies that demand quick sympathy (like medical bills they need to pay overseas, travel delays, or family problems)
- Requests for money or information to get out of an urgent situation
- Claims that only you can help because they can't ask anyone else

What you can do to protect your data (and your heart):

Spotting a romance scam isn't always easy or straightforward. The best defence is staying alert and trusting your instincts. Here are some things you can keep in mind to stay secure:

- Protect your privacy. Secure your accounts with strong and unique passwords, enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) and keep your devices up to date.
- Never send personal information, money, or gifts to someone you haven't met in person.
- If you're not sure if someone is who they say they are, try doing a reverse image search to make sure they aren't trying to catfish you.
- If someone pressures you for personal information outside of what would be expected in a normal dating relationship (like your SIN) or for financial information (like who you bank with), it's a red flag.

Get more tips to protect yourself and your devices



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