

How to Identify & Avoid Online Scammers & Cons



I encourage my students to sell in multiple online marketplaces, but to be aware of the con artists and their scams. eBay has one of the best anti-scammer procedures and policies. When you are selling on other platforms however, such as Facebook Marketplace and especially Craig's List, it is necessary to identify and avoid potential scams.

On the next page, I have created a list of frequent scams that occur when selling locally on the most popular online marketplaces. Refer to this list when receiving offers and communication from potential buyers.

Safe Selling is Happy Selling

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Boyd". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kevin Boyd M.S., M.B.A.

www.BeNicheAndFamous.com

Scammer Red Flags



The Most Common Scam

The most common scam involves **online payment services** such as **Venmo** and **Zelle**. Let's use Zelle as an example.

This is how the scam works. You list your item on an online selling marketplace and in your description, state that your method of payment is **Cash Only** (*this is correct*).

Usually, within just a few minutes of listing your item, you are contacted by a potential buyer. They state strongly that they want your item, but don't have the cash to pay for it. So, they write, "Can I just pay for the item now with Zelle?"

You have a Zelle account so you respond, "Yes." They then ask for your Zelle email address so they can send you the payment (this is proper procedure). You then proceed to give them your Zelle email address.

A few minutes later, you receive an email from Zelle that says someone has tried to send you money, but it was unsuccessful because of some minor problem in your account that needs to be easily resolved. Then there is a link in the email that takes you where you need to go on Zelle to resolve the problem. You click the link and enter your Zelle login and password. And **THAT** is the scam!

Actually, the email you received was **Not** from Zelle but from the scammer, and although the website you were directed to looked just like Zelle, it was not. It was a scam site, and you just gave the scammer your Zelle login and password.

It is important to note, that this scam is happening for **ALL** online payment methods – including PayPal. Therefore, the best way to avoid scammers, is to only accept Cash. It is nearly impossible to be scammed when all you will accept for payment, is **CASH!**

If you are thinking, well, what if they pay me with counterfeit bills? You can use a **Counterfeit Detector Pen** to identify if a bill is real or fake. You can find this pen on Amazon or eBay. To learn more about Real or Fake currency, visit my website here:

<https://www.benicheandfamous.com/real-vs-counterfeit-cash>

PRO TIP: Never accept **any** online payments. Only accept **CASH!**

Other Scammer Red Flags



There is a High Probability that the Potential Buyer is a Scammer

If the Buyer:

- Wants your **personal Email, Phone #, or Address** (unless they need it for an item pickup)
- Wants your **Banking Information**
- Offers **Extra Money**, if you will let them pay you with a **Personal Check**
- When **You** are the **Buyer**, and the seller wants you to pay them with **Gift Cards** for an item that will be shipped to you, it is most likely a scam. Gift Cards are untraceable, meaning you pay, get nothing (or a fake item) shipped to you, and your money is gone with no way to get it back.

Medium Probability that the Potential Buyer is a Scammer

If the Buyer:

- Has **Strange Communication** or **Unusual Requests** (mostly concerning payment method)
- Uses **Peculiar Wording** or **Poor Grammar** (like scammer emails from outside of the U.S.)
- Wants to **Communicate Outside of the App** or the standard method (so there is no formal record of your communication)
- Has **False Urgency** - you have to do the deal now! (well, no you don't)
- Makes an offer that sounds **Too Good to be True** (same with seller's offer when you are the buyer)
- Even after agreeing on a price, during the item exchange meetup, the buyer claims they don't have enough cash. They then ask if you will accept less? Well, your answer is **NO!** A way to cut down on this ploy is to write this for your final communication before the meetup:

"The final price then is **\$100 firm**, bring **Exact Cash**. Do you agree?"

If they agree, conduct the meetup. If they don't respond, you know what they were planning and you should cancel the meetup.

PRO TIP: In general, if something just doesn't seem right, trust your instincts and be safe. Walk away from the deal and sell your item to a genuine Buyer.

Haggling

Keep in mind that the buyer may want to Haggle. This is not a scam. On the contrary, it is expected. When you sell on local marketplace Apps, it is the same as having a garage sale. If you did have a garage sale and asked \$30 for your end table, you would expect a buyer to make a counter offer such as \$15. Then you both would discuss some agreed upon. The buyer is simply looking for a better deal. Likewise, expect online buyers to haggle.

Be Safe at Home

Most item exchanges are in person when the item is exchanged for cash. If it is a large item such as a piece of furniture, then a stranger may come to your home for the pickup. Don't be alone when they arrive. Have some friends there. Tell them what is happening and invite them over for the exchange. Maybe thank them with pizza afterward.

If the item can be moved by you and your friends, then take it out of your home and put it in the garage or driveway. Lock the door to your home before the buyer arrives.

Trade Stations - Schedule a Meetup

Sometimes the item you are selling is a bit large or bulky, but it is not too large to fit in your vehicle. In this case, consider scheduling a meetup with the buyer. This way, the buyer never comes to your home. *Google:* **Safe Trade Station List**

Most Trade Station locations are in the parking lot of your local police station. I can't think of a safer location to exchange your item for cash with a stranger than the parking lot of a police station. Be sure to call the police station first to learn their policies for exchanging online purchases in their parking lot. Also, make sure you schedule the meetup at the police station closest to you. This way, if the buyer is a no-show, you don't have far to drive home.

Use a Sales Receipt - with a Signature Line for the Pickup

It is important to use a Sales Receipt when selling your items. The exchange is then documented, and the Buyer has signed their **Name, Pickup Time** and **Date** on the receipt. This is now proof of the exchange preventing the buyer from later claiming they never received the item. I have created a Sales Receipt you can use and customize. It is Free to download from my website here:

<https://www.benicheandfamous.com/sales-receipt>

PRO TIP: What if the sale is for a large amount such as \$10,000?

Then you can either:

1. Meet the buyer at *Their* bank and watch while the buyer gets a cashier's check from the teller, that is made out to you. You then know it is good. (never just accept a cashier's check without watching it being printed in person).

- Or -

2. Have the buyer meet you at *Your* bank and bring exact cash. Ask the teller to authenticate the cash, and then immediately deposit it into your account.

In either case, you can then give the item to the buyer in the bank's parking lot.