



Money Transfer Scams

Wiring money – through companies like MoneyGram and Western Union – is like sending cash. Once it's gone, you can't get it back. That's one reason scammers often insist that people wire money, especially to addresses overseas. It's nearly impossible to reverse the transfer, trace the money, or track the recipients.

What's Risky About Using Money Transfers?

Money transfers can be useful if you want to send money to someone you know and trust. At the same time, they are risky when you send money to someone you don't know. That's why many law enforcement agencies caution against it.

The recipient of a money transfer gets the money quickly, so it's nearly impossible to reverse the transfer if you realize you've made a mistake.

How to Avoid Money Transfer Scams?

Don't wire money to a stranger or someone you haven't met in person. That includes:

- anyone who insists on wire transfers for payment
- an online love interest who asks for money
- someone advertising an apartment or vacation rental online
- a potential employer or someone who is hiring you to be a mystery shopper
- someone who claims to be a relative or friend in need. They say they're in a foreign hospital or jail, and they beg you not to tell the rest of the family.

In a variation, scammers ask you to deposit a check for them, and then wire money back to them. The scam is that the check is fake. It will bounce, and you'll owe your bank the money you withdrew. By law, banks must make the funds from deposited checks available within a few days, but it can take weeks to uncover a fake check. It may seem that the check has cleared and that the money is in your account. But if a check later turns out to be a fake, you'll owe the bank any money you withdrew.

Report Money Transfer Scams

If you think you've wired money to a scam artist, call the money transfer company immediately to report the fraud and file a complaint. Ask for the money transfer to be reversed. It's unlikely to happen, but it's important to ask. Then, file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at **[ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint)**.