

Rental Scams Explained

If you're looking for an apartment or house to rent, you might think about things like price, location, and utilities. It's also important to know how to spot scams.



What's a rental scam?

Scammers make up listings for places that aren't for rent or don't exist. They want to get your money before you figure out the listing is fake.

The scammers might also try to get information from you, like your Social Security or bank account number. Then they can use that information to steal your identity.

How do I avoid scammers?

There are ways to help protect yourself from scammers. Before you sign a lease or pay:

- 1. Look at the apartment or house.** Visit in person. If you can't go, ask someone you trust to see it for you. They can check if it's really for rent and if it matches what's in the ad.
- 2. Compare the price.** If the rent is much lower than other rents in the area, it could be a sign of a scam. And if someone says you have to decide quickly to get a great deal, walk away.
- 3. Search online.** Look up the name of the property owner or rental company with words like "complaint," "review," or "scam." See what other people say about their experiences.
- 4. Be careful how you pay.** Don't send money if a landlord says you can only pay with cash, a gift card, cryptocurrency, or a wire transfer service like Western Union or MoneyGram. Anyone who demands that you pay these ways is a scammer. Wiring money, sending gift cards, or paying with cryptocurrency is like sending cash. After you send the money, it's hard to get it back.

Read **If You Were Scammed** at consumer.gov/scams to learn what to do if you think you paid a scammer.



How do I report a rental scam?

If you spot a rental scam, tell your state attorney general at consumerresources.org.
Then tell the Federal Trade Commission:

- ▶ Go online at ReportFraud.ftc.gov
- ▶ Call **1-877-382-4357**

