

Abstract: No matter the season, scam artists look for new victims, including those who would pick the pockets of older people in search of money and financial data. This article offers seven ways to help prevent elder financial abuse and fraud.

Help prevent financial scams aimed at older people

In any season, scam artists are on the lookout for ways to steal financial data and money from vulnerable people. Such fraudulent activities often target older adults. Whether you're in this age bracket or worry about senior parents and other relatives, here are seven ways to help prevent elder financial abuse and fraud:

1. Keep both paper and online financial documents in a secure place. Monitor accounts and retain statements.
2. Exercise caution when making financial decisions. If someone exerts pressure or promises unreasonably high or guaranteed returns, walk away.
3. Write checks only to legitimate financial institutions, rather than to a person.
4. Be alert for phony phone calls. The IRS doesn't collect money this way. Another scam involves someone pretending to be a grandchild who's in trouble and needs money. Don't provide confidential information or send money until you can verify the caller's identity.
5. Beware of emails requesting personal data — even if they appear to be from a real financial institution. Remember, your banker or financial professional already has these things. Ignore contact information provided in the email. Instead, contact the financial institution through a known telephone number.
6. As much as possible, maintain a social network. Criminals target isolated people because often they're less aware of scams and lack trusted confidants.
7. Work only with qualified professionals, including accountants, bankers and attorneys.

Most important, never let your guard down. Thieves are on the lookout for vulnerable people, so you need to be on the lookout for thieves.