

8 common Facebook Marketplace scams and how to avoid them

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, July 7, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Phil Muncaster, guest writer at [ESET](#) explains what to watch out for when buying or selling stuff on the online marketplace and how to tell if you're being scammed

Last year, Facebook Marketplace passed one billion global users. In so doing, it's become a giant of the consumer-to-consumer space, allowing individual Facebook users to buy from and sell to each other seamlessly. It has surpassed the popularity of Craigslist for several reasons. It's also free and simple to use, as most people already have a Facebook account. It allows users to search for listings from their local area, making pick-up much easier. And because people can view sellers' profiles, they feel more assured of safety and security on the site. Unfortunately, this is often a false sense of security.



One recent survey revealed that one in six (17%) respondents had been defrauded on the site. Of course, much of the commerce on this "classified-ad section" of Facebook is legitimate, but like any other online marketplace, it also attracts plenty of scammers.

It's little wonder then that the social network is having a hard time stopping the fraudsters, sometimes over-zealously blocking legitimate users while inadvertently allowing scams to slip through a combination of automated checks and human reviewers. With fake listings extending to apartment sales and car purchases, the stakes are pretty high.

That puts an even greater pressure on users to understand the typical tricks that online con artists use, and what they can do to stay safe. Here are the top eight scams to watch out for on Facebook Marketplace and how to spot the red flags:

1. Defective items

Sellers may advertise a product that looks fine from the photograph they posted. But once it has

been delivered, or you get it home, it turns out to be broken. It's particularly tricky when buying electronic items, because you usually can't toggle through every bit of functionality before handing over the money. This is as likely to happen due to an unscrupulous seller as a professional fraudster.

2. Counterfeit items

If it's not broken, then it may be a fake product. Designer clothes, perfume, jewelry and cosmetics are particularly common targets for counterfeiting. Like defective item scams, it's difficult to ascertain whether they're genuine or not just from a small photo. Everyone's looking for a bargain. But when offers seem too good to be true, they usually are.

3. Google Voice scams

Facebook Marketplace is also used to leverage other types of fraud, potentially on other platforms. In one example, the scammer agrees to buy an item. But then after taking the conversation onto a non-monitored platform like WhatsApp, they ask the seller to authenticate themselves with a verification code. In reality, the code sent to the seller's phone is a two-factor authentication code sent by Google Voice and initiated by the fraudster. Now they are able to create an account using the seller's phone number, which can be used in other scams. With more information still they could attempt to open other accounts in your name or access existing ones.

4. Overpayment

Sellers can also get scammed by fraudsters on Facebook Marketplace. In one classic example, they will claim to have overpaid for an item you're selling, and post a screenshot apparently showing the transaction. They'll ask for the difference to be refunded. But of course, there was no original payment, and now you're down the refund amount.

5. Non-delivery (advance fee)

A classic trick is to sell an item and collect the money but then never deliver it to the buyer. This obviously only applies to items sent from outside the buyer's local area.

6. Fake giveaways/phishing

One way to get that additional information is to spam out giveaway offers via Facebook Marketplace. Simply by clicking on a link and filling in a bit of personal information, the victim believes they're going to be in line for some free luxury items, crypto or other special deals. Of course, the scammers just want their personal information to commit follow-on identity fraud or theft.

7. Insurance scams

Sellers with expensive items posted to Facebook Marketplace may also be contacted by fraudulent buyers. The latter agree to pay for shipping and send over a fake invoice to 'prove' that they have. There's just one catch, they need the seller to pay a small insurance charge. It may be a relatively small amount compared to the item for sale, which may persuade the seller

to go along with it.

8. Bait-and-switch

Scammers advertise what is often a high-quality product with a very tempting price tag. When you want to grab the “bargain”, that product is “gone” and you will be offered a similar item for a much steeper price or an inferior alternative.

How to spot a Facebook Marketplace scam

As with any kind of online fraud, the key for internet users is to remain sceptical and alert. Here are 10 tips to help you navigate Facebook Marketplace safely:

- Inspect items before purchasing by only buying from local sellers.
- Always meet in a public place rather than at your home, and in a well-lit area ideally during daylight hours.
- Check buyer/seller profiles for user ratings, and stay alert if profiles have been created only recently.
- Check the original price of items and if there is a significant gulf between this and the for-sale price, be alert to the fact it may be counterfeit/stolen/defective, etc.
- Beware of giveaway deals and never enter personal details to access them.
- Only use trusted payment methods via Facebook Messenger (PayPal, Facebook Checkout) as they offer a way to dispute a payment. Gift cards, wire transfers, and payments via services like Venmo and Zelle are commonly requested by fraudsters.
- Keep your conversation on Facebook – scammers like to move the conversation to another platform where they have an easier time swindling people and possibly preventing them from disputing transactions.
- Never ship items before payment has been made.
- Watch out for changes in the listing price.
- Don't send 2FA codes to prospective buyers.

If the worst happens and you suspect fraud, you should report the seller – here's how.

As the cost-of-living crisis bites, more users than ever will be turning to online platforms like Facebook Marketplace to get hold of goods at discounted rates. Be warned: fraudsters also patrol the platform in ever-greater numbers.

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