

# Stillman BANK

## Common Fraud Schemes and How to Protect Your Money

You hear of fraud happening to people on the news, but you typically think it won't actually happen to you, right? Think again. Fraudsters are employing schemes that are trickier than ever and even the most cautious people are feeling the impact.

### Lottery or Sweepstakes You Never Entered

**How it happens:** Congratulations, you just won the Ukrainian lottery! Which you never entered. All you have to do is pay the taxes on your winnings in order to get the money through customs, then you will have access to your new fortune.

**What happens next:** You will be asked for more and more money in order to gain access to your fortune. In the end, the money you sent for your non-existent lottery funds are gone and you will see no fortune.

**Prevention:** No matter how lucky you think are, if you didn't play the lottery, you are not going to win. If it sounds too good to be true, it most likely is. Be sure to block the phone number or email trying to contact you to avoid answering in the future. **If you don't recognize the number, don't answer!**

### Prince or Government Official Needs Your Help

**How it happens:** Someone contacts you by social media, text, phone call, or email saying they need your assistance. They have millions of dollars that they cannot get out of their home country and they need help with customs, taxes, or bribes and they need your help, even though you don't know them. They ask you to send them money, your bank account number or even gift cards and you will receive part of this fortune.

**What happens next:** The requests for bribes, wires, attorney fees, and funds will continue, no matter how much you give. In reality, your money is gone and you will see nothing.

**Prevention:** Block this person on whatever way the contacted you. Never send money to someone you do not know and have met in person. **No stranger is going to share money with you!**

### Internet Sale

**How it happens:** You are selling something on the internet and are using a trustworthy website. A buyer is interested, but they make a mistake and send you a \$1,500 cashier check for your \$1,000 product. All you need to do is deposit the extra money and send it back to them.

**What happens next:** You have shipped the product to the buyer and you deposit the check and send extra cash to them. Now the original check bounces and all of your attempts to contact the buyer is ignored. Now you are out both your product and \$500.

**Prevention:** Stop! Don't ever send money when you are the one selling. It's a scam! Use PayPal or wait until the check clears or better yet only accept cash.

### **Bogus business**

**How it happens:** You're looking for work and find a job as an assistant to an overseas business, or even a mystery shopper. Part of this new job requires you to open a bank account so for the funds. Different transactions begin appearing in the account and you are told where to send the money.

**What happens next:** The business you are "working for" is not legit and the funds you have received are stolen in other scams. You are now responsible for the theft of the money, distributing it, and the now missing funds. You are a money mule, and are part of the crime.

**Prevention:** Don't accept a job virtually! Always research companies beforehand, because chances are you won't find any evidence they even exist. If it does seem like a real company, contact them to make sure the employee and job opportunity actually exists. Also, never use your personal account to distribute money for a business.

### **Romance**

**How it happens:** You met a new friend online and they are overseas or in the military, but you never meet in person. You start chatting with one another and have "genuine" communication, you develop a relationship with this person and possibly even get engaged. This person claims to station in life that sounds responsible, and you may even be able to video chat with them in person. Unfortunately, they are unable to travel to meet you due to travel restrictions. You offer to help them financially to afford a lawyer or plane ticket, all in the name of love.

**What happens next:** Over time they will ask for more and more money from you. The requests are urgent and they always tell you not to tell your bank or family what is happening because they say they are the only one who truly knows and understands you. In reality, you are being scammed and once you run out of money, you won't hear from them again.

**Prevention:** Always be alert to friend requests online. It's usually a scam if it escalates very quickly into a relationship, even if it feels real. Make sure to never send money to someone you have not met in person, even if you have seen their face through video chat. Report this person to the website you were contacted on and block them.

### **Distraught Grandchildren**

**How it happens:** Your grandchild calls you and needs your help because they are in trouble. They are in jail or the hospital or want to secretly get married but they do not want their parents to know. You are asked to send the money right away in order to help them out.

**What happens next:** Your grandchild is really not in trouble and is not contacting you. Instead, you're communicating with and sending money to a scammer, who is most likely from a foreign country.

**Prevention:** Immediately call your grandchild or their parent to verify the story. The grandchildren are almost always perfectly safe and they should be aware that someone is using their information to scam others.

### **Random phone call**

**How it happens:** You receive a random phone call and it even looks like it comes from someone local, same area code, sometimes same prefix. You pick it up and your car warranty expired or you are late on your electric bill or you have a pending court judgement against you. There are many excises. What they want is your bank account number or card number to take funds to settle it for you.

**What happens next:** You give them the number to make sure the service is not cancelled. They run fake charges up and may even sell your information on the dark web. Identity theft has just happened.

**Prevention:** If you don't recognize the number even if local, don't answer. Let it go to voicemail and see if a message is left and listen to it later. If its someone you need to talk to then put it in your contacts. Only answer calls from contacts!

### **Random check**

**How it happens:** You get a check mailed to you; it looks legitimate, "certified" "bank draft" "Cashiers check" It may even have a logo of a bank you have heard of before. It may even have been mailed to you by FedEx. There's a phone number somewhere on it or you may get a follow-up phone call from someone asking about it.

**What happens next:** You got that check by accident you are told, but just send back a check for a lesser amount and keep the difference for your trouble. The check is no good and get returned and you are out the money you sent back

**Prevention:** If you get a check for no reason, it's fake. Don't call any number back, don't send any money back.

### **In conclusion**

All scammers have one thing in common: they hope you are too embarrassed to tell anyone that you fell for a scheme or too proud to admit you were tricked and keep sending money their way to show you were right all along. If you think you are being scammed check with someone you trust. A banker or attorney can help you protect your money and identity. There are many other scams out there including ones involving your computer. Be careful when letting anyone on your computer or electronic device, when opening emails from someone you don't know or downloading attachments or files.

Unfortunately, we have seen some customers lose their hard-earned money through fraud, all because they were chasing instant riches, kindness, and love. Stillman Bank offers an identity theft guide at <https://www.stillmanbank.com/other-services/identity-theft-kit/> for additional guidance.