

PRINTABLE GUIDE

Pause and check a possible online scam

A scam is an attempt to trick you into giving money, information or access. It can arrive through calls, messages, adverts or fake warnings. You do not need to prove something is fraudulent before you pause and verify it independently.

Any device | 2 min read | 5 steps

Before you start

- ☐ Keep your bank's genuine contact number somewhere accessible.
- ☐ Use a second trusted route to check unexpected requests.

1. Stop the immediate action

Do not send money, share a code or install software while under pressure. Hang up an unexpected call. Close a warning page; do not call a number printed inside a pop-up.

- ☐ Done this step

2. Name what you are being asked to do

Look for requests to pay a surprise fee, move money, reveal a password or allow remote access. Urgency and claims of authority deserve extra checking, even when the message looks polished.

- ☐ Done this step

3. Check through a separate route

Open the organisation's known app or type its official website address yourself. Contact it using an independently verified number. If a relative requests money, call their existing number.

- ☐ Done this step

4. Protect anything already shared

If you sent money or card details, contact your bank immediately through its official route. If you shared a password, change it through the genuine service and check account access.

☐ Done this step

5. Report and keep useful details

Use the NCSC reporting guidance for suspicious messages or websites. Keep relevant screenshots and transaction details for your bank or reporting service without continuing the conversation.

☐ Done this step

Try it for yourself

Write 'pause, check separately, then decide' beside your banking contact details.

☐ I tried the task.

My notes

Does good spelling prove a message is genuine?

No. Scams can use accurate spelling, real logos and personal details. Independent confirmation of the request matters more than its appearance.

Official help and the online guide

NCSC phishing and reporting - <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/phishing-scams>

NCSC signs of scam messages - <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/phishing-scams/spot-scams>

Read online: <https://plaintech-guides.pages.dev/guides/pause-and-check-an-online-scam/>