

West Virginia Executive Branch
February 2023 Privacy Tip
Online Romance and Dating Scams

Roses are red, violets are blue, and we all know that not everything – or everyone – online is true.

But can you tell the difference between someone who is simply using a decades-old photo and a lothario scammer trying to swoon their way to every dollar in your bank account? Romance scams, or online dating scams, are no joke! Romance scammers are masters of disguise and play on their victims' emotions to get them to open up their wallets. With some knowledge, ensure love is in the air...not fraud! Most importantly, reach out to friends and family if you suspect your online fling might be headed toward scummier territory. Don't be ashamed! A trusted outside observer will likely help you determine if the romance is real.

What is a Romance Scam?

Online dating scams, romance scams, and sweetheart scams are all terms that refer to the same basic concept: a bad actor creates a fake online profile, hits the open web, and stirs up romantic feelings in victims. After some not-so-innocent flirtation, eventually the scammer asks for money.

Look for the Red Flags:

The goal of romance scammers is to be as convincing as possible, but many of them follow the same playbook. This means that there are some red flags you should always be aware of when searching for your soulmate online.

- The person requests money for urgent matters, such as medical expenses or a plane ticket.
- Never send money to someone you haven't met in person. Scammers will often request hard-to-track forms of payment, like pre-loaded gift cards.
- The person claims to live far away from you, often in a foreign country. They might also say they are in the military and serving overseas.
- The relationship seems to be moving very fast.
- The person breaks promises to see you in person.

For more information on how to stay safe online, please visit <https://staysafeonline.org/>

