

How to Stay Protected in the Job Search

Searching for a job can be an intimidating process, involving time-consuming tactics such as goal setting, networking, research, and follow-through. New avenues of job-searching (e.g., website advertisements, employment search engines, job placement services) have all made job searching easier, more accessible, and unfortunately, more open to fraud. It is important to stay safe by safeguarding your personal information and looking out for such fraudulent posts.

1. Keep a **look-out** for fraudulent online job posts

- Be perceptive to deceptive job advertisements that may appear legitimate.
- Pay attention to some red flags, such as those that advertise low-risk, high-salary jobs requiring only a résumé and/or personal information to get started, or those that feature work-at-home opportunities.
- Stay away from fraudulent posts that promise large payouts for accountant or finance manager jobs that require receiving, repackaging, and reshipping items sent to their homes from overseas – these items are most often bought with stolen money and victimized applicants eventually deal with the financial and legal consequences.
- Be aware that many scammers trick applicants to losing their own money, engage in illegal activities, or simply steal their identity for further fraudulent transactions.

2. Seek only legitimate **job placement** services

- Be aware of potential deception in other avenues in addition to fraudulent online posts.
- Search for job placement services (firms that offer career management and placement opportunities) that do not charge hidden fees, and provides refunds if a suitable position is not found.
- *Keep in mind that most reputable placement firms charge employers, not job seekers, for recruitment services – payment requests for applications, training, and placement may signal fraud.*

3. Stay safe during **interviews**

- Tell a friend or relative where you are going and where you will be when participating in interviews.
- Confirm that the interview location is in a public place, not a private home, bar, or location that is not easily accessible.
- Coordinate a safe method of transportation to and from the interview location.
- Research the company before the interview to ensure the interviewer has a legitimate relationship to the organization with which they claim to be affiliated with.
- *While interviewing, never engage in any activities that make you feel uncomfortable or pressured.*

Keep yourself safe and protected from fraud and job scams by keeping the following list in mind:

Safety Tips

- Keep sensitive information to yourself. Legitimate employers will never ask you for your usernames, passwords, driver's license, bank account, or credit card information. Identity theft can begin with as little as your name and social security number – only reveal this information after confirming that the company is credible.
- Be smart when using online job posting websites; personal information such as your résumé should be posted sparingly. Use a disposable email address for these websites, and read the privacy policy for the website to make sure you can delete your information at will.
- Never forward, transfer, or wire money to an employer. You will not only lose money in the process, but can be prosecuted for facilitating stolen money and goods.
- Beware of handing over money – you should not have to pay an employer money as a condition of applying to or receiving a job. Any company that requests payment for training or an initial investment should raise a red flag.
- Be on the lookout for any red flags. Companies that conduct email-only communication, use broken English and/or spelling mistakes, promise high pay with no experience necessary, or require little qualifications are often fraudulent. Vague and exaggerated statements should catch your attention as unrealistic and a potential scam.
- Research prospective employers and report any suspicious activities. In order to ensure the legitimacy of a potential employer, check with agencies like the Better Business Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission to see if any complaints have been filed against the company.

If you fall victim to a job scam, file a police report right away. Keep an eye on your financials by ordering a credit report from major credit agencies such as Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion. Close all bank accounts that are linked to the fraudulent job opportunity. Make sure you report the company and your experience to the Better Business Bureau, Federal Trade Commission, and any other relevant organizations. Feel free to make an appointment with a Center for Career Development consultant to discuss safer ways to look for a job. Remember, you can conduct an effective job search and stay safe at the same time.