

Don't Fall for Gift Card Scams This Holiday Season

Gift cards make great gifts! In fact, they top many holiday wish lists. However, whenever you purchase that 'perfect' gift for that special someone, be observant of the potential scams that are lurking everywhere. Below are 5 gift card-related scams to be on the lookout for.

Phone Scams

Scammers will call trying to pressure someone with either legal actions, threats of debt collection or even threats to turn off their utility services. The scammer will then tell the victim that they must purchase gift cards in certain amounts and supply the card numbers to fix the issue. Gift cards should never be used as a payment to cover something else.

Money Trouble

Scammers frequently try to influence sympathy by claiming they are having money issues or that they're in danger and need money fast. This tactic can involve the scammer posing as someone you know or creating a fake dating profile. And of course, a gift card is the only thing that will assist them in their time of need.

Online Sales

On an auction site or online, gift cards may be available for less than their stated value. If it seems to go to be true, it likely is. Why would any company sell a \$50 gift card for pennies? The answer is they wouldn't.

Point-of-Sale

It is essential to always keep an eye on the gift card when purchasing. Another scam tactic can occur at the point-of-sale, when the cashier rings up your card but then switches it with another card thus pocketing your card for themselves.

The Collector

This scam requires quite a bit of patience and persistence. A scammer uses a magstripe reader to collect card numbers, then using a computer script they wait for the card to be activated by a paying customer. Once activated, the scammer now can use the money. This tactic would likely damage the card packaging, so be sure to only purchase unblemished cards.

Check out these [additional fraud alerts](#) to be on the lookout for.

QUICK TIPS:

- Only buy gift cards from trusted stores and websites.
- Don't give or accept gift cards as a form of payment.
- Check your gift card packaging before purchasing.
- Don't activate your gift card until you're ready to use it.
- Keep your receipts from gift card purchases.
- If you think you are a victim of a gift card scam, contact the company on the card immediately.

*If you have any questions or concerns about emails, websites or unsolicited calls related to Universal 1, please email our Compliance department at compliance@u1cu.org. You can also call our eServices representatives at **800-543-5000 option 0** or **937-431-3100 option 0**. We are available **Monday - Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** and **Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.***

If you suspect you are a victim of identity theft or your information was exposed in a data breach, visit The Federal Trade Commission's ID theft recovery plan [webpage](#) to take action.

The scams listed here are by no means exhaustive. Scammers are continuously looking for new tactics to separate you from your money. Practicing awareness and educating yourself on potential scams are simple ways to protect yourself from becoming a victim of one these attacks.