



ONLINE PROJECT

Recognizing and Avoiding Online Scams and Fraud: A Guide for Young Shoppers

In today's digital age, young shoppers are increasingly turning to online platforms for their purchases. While the internet offers convenience and a wide variety of choices, it also comes with risks, particularly in the form of online scams and fraud. It's crucial for kids and teens to be aware of these dangers and know how to protect themselves. This article explores common online scams targeting young shoppers and provides tips on how to identify and avoid suspicious websites, emails, and offers.



Common Online Scams Targeting Young Shoppers

Phishing Scams: These scams involve fraudulent emails or messages that appear to be from legitimate sources, such as popular retailers or social media platforms. The goal is to trick recipients into providing personal information, such as passwords or credit card numbers.

Fake Online Stores: Scammers create websites that mimic legitimate online stores. These sites often offer popular items at unusually low prices to lure in unsuspecting shoppers. Once a purchase is made, the items are never delivered, and the scammers disappear with the money.

Social Media Scams: Scammers use social media platforms to advertise fake products or services. They may use hacked accounts or create fake profiles to gain trust. Once a purchase is made, the victim either receives counterfeit goods or nothing at all.

Free Gift or Prize Scams: These scams promise free gifts or prizes in exchange for personal information or a small fee. Once the victim provides their details or pays the fee, they receive nothing in return and their information is often used for further scams.

Mobile App Scams: Some apps, especially those not downloaded from official app stores, can contain malware that steals personal information or locks the device until a ransom is paid.



Tips for Identifying and Avoiding Online Scams

Verify Website Legitimacy: Before making a purchase, check the website's URL for any misspellings or extra characters. Look for "https://" at the beginning of the URL, which indicates a secure connection.



Check for Contact Information: Legitimate online stores will provide clear contact information, including a physical address and customer service number. If this information is missing or difficult to find, it could be a red flag.



Read Reviews: Look for customer reviews on third-party websites to gauge the legitimacy of an online store. Be cautious if the store has no reviews or only positive reviews, which could be fake.



Be Wary of Too-Good-to-Be-True Offers: If a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is. Extremely low prices or promises of free gifts are often tactics used by scammers to lure victims.



Avoid Clicking on Suspicious Links: Do not click on links or download attachments from unknown or unexpected emails and messages. These could be phishing attempts or contain malware.



Use Secure Payment Methods: When shopping online, use secure payment methods like credit cards or reputable payment services that offer fraud protection. Avoid using wire transfers or prepaid debit cards, which are difficult to trace and recover.



The ONLINE Project: Empowering Students and Teachers

The ONLINE project aims to address these challenges by offering innovative learning opportunities to lower secondary school teachers, enhancing their digital competences and, in turn, improving the digital skills of students aged 11-14. By using client-based challenges and case studies, the project helps students navigate e-commerce platforms safely and assertively.

The project focuses on micro-learning opportunities for teachers, equipping them with the skills to teach their students how to act consciously and safely in the digital marketplace. This includes recognizing and avoiding online scams, understanding secure online shopping practices, and fostering collaboration across subjects such as maths and marketing.

By integrating these new digital competences into the curriculum, **the ONLINE project ensures that the education system remains responsive to the evolving needs of students and families, ultimately creating a safer and more informed online shopping environment for young users.**

