



## FINDINGS FROM THE 2021 BBB® ONLINE PURCHASE SCAMS REPORT

# How to Stay Safe Online

### What is an online purchase scam?

Online purchase scams typically involve the purchase of products and/or services where the transaction occurs via a website or other online means. Scammers use technology to offer attractive deals but, once the payment is made, no product or service is delivered or in some cases, fraudsters send low-quality or counterfeit products.

## Research Findings

**More than 35% of scams** reported to BBB Scam Tracker<sup>SM</sup> in 2021 so far are online purchase scams with **75% of targets losing money.\***

**Ages 18-24 were more likely to report losing money (81.1%)** than all other age groups; young adults **also lost more money** than other age groups.

**56%** of survey respondents who reported **not actively searching for products while on Facebook** lost money.

**47%** of survey respondents who reported **actively searching for a product or a business via a Google search** lost money.

**Those who reported using BBB.org or BBB Scam Tracker** for their research were **less likely to report losing money.**

\* Data for 2021 includes reports submitted between January 2021 and August 2021.



When asked to choose between fake and real customer reviews, survey respondents were **unable to tell the difference.** Can you?

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## 9 Online Purchase Scam Prevention Tips

How and where you search, research, and conduct transactions online makes a difference in how susceptible you may be to an online purchase scam.

### 1 Don't make a purchase decision based only on customer reviews.

When asked to choose between fake and real customer reviews, survey respondents were [unable to tell the difference](#).

### 2 Do more research on those products you found via online search.

47% of survey respondents who reported [actively searching](#) for a product or a business via a Google search lost money. [Research the company offering the products](#).

### 3 But remember, the source of your research is important.

Those who conducted research with BBB or BBB Scam Tracker were [less likely to report losing money](#) than those who researched via search engines or social media.

### 4 If the deal looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Price was the top motivating factor for people who made a purchase and then lost money. [Don't shop on price alone](#).

### 5 Be careful purchasing sought-after products.

Scammers offer [hard-to-find items and highly sought-after products](#) at great prices.

### 6 Avoid making quick purchases while browsing social media.

Forty-two percent of survey respondents who reported [passively browsing](#) on Facebook lost money. [Be more intentional about your online purchases and avoid impulse buying](#).

### 7 Use secure and traceable transactions.

Those who paid via credit card or PayPal were [more likely to report recovering their money](#) through their payment processing company.

### 8 Choose your online payment system carefully.

Our research found that the median dollar loss reported for PayPal was [significantly lower](#) than other online payment systems.

### 9 Don't believe everything you see.

Scammers are great at mimicking official seals, fonts, and other details. Just because a website or email looks official does not mean it is. For example, [if a business displays a BBB Accredited Business seal, you can verify its legitimacy by going to BBB.org and looking up the company yourself](#).

Download the full report at  
[BBB.org/OnlinePurchaseScams2021](https://www.bbb.org/OnlinePurchaseScams2021)

