20 Ways to Protect Your Finances During the Holiday Season

The holiday season brings opportunities to celebrate, give back, and find great deals. However, the increase in online shopping, travel, charitable giving, and financial transactions can also create opportunities for fraud and theft. Taking a few precautions can help protect your personal information, your money, and your peace of mind.

Below are 20 practical steps you can take to help safeguard your finances throughout the holiday season.



1. Retrieve Packages Promptly

Package theft often becomes a concern during the busy holiday shopping season. Bring deliveries inside as soon as possible to reduce the risk of theft and avoid signaling that you may be away from home. Consider using a secure delivery location, such as an Amazon locker, when available.

2. Keep Your Devices Updated

Install software and security updates on your phone, computer, tablet, and other connected devices. These updates often address vulnerabilities that criminals could exploit to gain access to your information.

3. Use Reliable Security Software

Use reputable antivirus and security software on compatible devices, and ensure automatic updates are enabled when available.

4. Complete Transactions Through Official Pages

When buying or shopping online, keep communications and payments within the platform's approved system. Be cautious if someone asks you to complete a transaction through a separate website, email, or text message to avoid platform fees.

5. Limit Information Shared on Social Media

Avoid publicly announcing upcoming trips, extended absences, or other details that could compromise your home's security. Review your privacy settings and be mindful when presented with advertisements promoting unfamiliar retailers or unusually good deals.

6. Recognize Suspicious Emails and Messages

Phishing attempts may increase during the holiday season as scammers impersonate retailers, delivery companies, financial institutions, and government agencies. Avoid clicking unexpected links or opening suspicious attachments. Never share passwords or sensitive information in response to an unsolicited request. When something seems questionable, contact the company through its verified website or phone number.

7. Confirm Delivery Notifications Independently

Messages claiming that a package is delayed, requires an additional fee, or cannot be delivered may be designed to steal your information. Rather than clicking a link in an unexpected email or text, visit the retailer's official website.

8. Be Cautious with Digital Gift Cards

Fraudulent digital gift card communications can be used to distribute malicious links or software. Avoid opening unexpected digital greeting cards from unfamiliar senders.

9. Verify Charitable Organizations Before Donating

Holiday giving is an opportunity to support meaningful causes, but fraudulent appeals can take advantage of people's generosity. Watch for imitation charity names, suspicious phone calls, misleading websites, or pressure to donate immediately.

10. Cryptocurrency Scams

Be skeptical of investment opportunities promising guaranteed returns, quick profits, or minimal risk. Fraudsters may use fake investment platforms, fraudulent mining software, and fabricated celebrity endorsements to gain access to your money or personal information. Research the investment and the company independently before committing funds and never invest based solely on an online advertisement.

11. Purchase Gift Cards From Trusted Sources

Buy gift cards directly from reputable retailers or their authorized websites. Avoid deals from unfamiliar sellers and inspect the physical gift cards for signs of tampering before purchasing them.

12. Shop with Established Retailers

Fraudulent online stores may imitate legitimate businesses or advertise products at prices that seem too good to be true. Shop with retailers you recognize, verify website addresses before entering payment information, and research unfamiliar sellers before making a purchase. A professional looking website alone does not guarantee that the business is legitimate.

13. Protect Your Personal Information

Websites offer coupons, discounts, or prize entries in exchange for personal details. Before completing a form, consider whether the requested information is necessary and how it may be used. Avoid sharing sensitive information with unverified businesses and review the privacy practices of websites and applications before using them.

14. Compare Prices and Research Sellers

Plan your purchases by comparing prices, reviewing product details, and checking retailer policies before placing an order. Look for independent customer reviews, accessible customer service information, and clear shipping and return policies. Be cautious of websites that require unnecessary personal information to unlock a discount or provide a coupon.

15. Check Products for Safety Recalls

If you are purchasing toys, electronics, or other consumer products as gifts, verify that the items have not been recalled. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission provides information about recalled products on its official website.

16. Review Financial Institution and Credit Card Activity Regularly

With additional holiday purchases, it can be easy to overlook unfamiliar transactions. Review your account activity frequently and investigate charges you do not recognize, even if the amounts are small. Early detection can help you report unauthorized activity before additional transactions occur.

17. Create Strong, Unique Passwords

Using the same password across multiple websites can put several accounts at risk if one experiences a data breach. Create a different, complex password for each account, especially those connected to your finances. A reputable password manager can help you generate and securely store unique passwords.

18. Verify Website Security Before Paying

Before entering payment details, confirm that you are visiting the correct website and that the connection is encrypted. Only make online purchases from a web address that begins with HTTPS.

19. Watch Your Belongings

Holiday shopping can be distracting. Hopping from store to store can lower your guard. Make sure to keep track of your wallet, purse, and phone at all times. Additionally, never leave your car unlocked.

20. Avoid Public Wi-Fi

Public Wi-Fi networks in shopping centers, airports, hotels, and cafes may not provide adequate protection. Avoid accessing financial accounts or completing sensitive transactions when connected to unfamiliar networks.