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Ways to Spot a Lottery Scam

Solicitation scams, commonly referred to as an “advance fee,” “lottery” or “sweepstakes” scam, often begin with fraudsters telling the victim they won the lottery or a raffle. The consumer may be issued a check worth more than the amount owed and instructed to pay taxes and fees before receiving a lump sum payment. Unfortunately, the check—in addition to the raffle—is bogus.

- 1. Don't be fooled by the appearance of the check.** Scam artists use sophisticated technology to create legitimate-looking counterfeit checks, money orders, and cashier's checks. The company name may be real, but someone has forged the checks without their knowledge.
- 2. Never “pay to play.”** If someone who is giving you money asks you to wire money back or send more than the exact amount—that's a red flag that it's a scam. If a stranger wants to pay you for something, insist on a cashier's check for the exact amount, preferably from a local bank or one with a local branch.
- 3. Verify the requestor before you wire funds or issue a check.** It is important to know who you are sending money to before you make a payment. Confirm the requestor is a trusted source.
- 4. Just because the check has cleared does not mean it's good.** Under federal law, banks must make deposited funds available quickly, but it can take days for the bank to learn that a check was bad.
- 5. Report suspected fraud to your bank immediately.** Bank staff are trained to spot fraudulent checks. If you think someone gave you a fake check, don't deposit it—report it. Contact your local bank and report it to the Federal Trade Commission at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov).

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