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# **FBI Cautions Public to be Wary of Online Romance Scams**

## **FBI Provides Tips for Those Looking for Love Online**

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is working to raise awareness about online romance scams, also called confidence fraud. In this type of fraud, scammers take advantage of people looking for romantic partners on dating websites, apps, or social media by obtaining access to their financial or personal identifying information. Romance scams are prevalent during this time of year, and the FBI cautions everyone who may be romantically involved with a person online.

According to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), which provides the public with a means of reporting Internet-facilitated crimes, romance scams result in the highest amount of financial losses to victims when compared to other online crimes. In 2016, almost 15,000 complaints categorized as romance scams were reported to IC3 (nearly 2,500 more than the previous year), and the losses associated with those complaints exceeded \$230 million.

"If you suspect an online relationship is a scam, stop all contact immediately," said Special Agent in Charge Timothy R. Slater of the FBI Washington Field Office's Criminal Division. "We recognize that it may be embarrassing for victims to report this type of fraud scheme because of the personal relationships that are developed, but we ask for victims to come forward so the FBI can ensure that these online imposters are brought to justice."

The following tips may be helpful to consider if you develop a romantic relationship with someone you meet online:

- Research the person's photo and profile using online searches to see if the material has been used elsewhere.
- Go slow and ask a lot of questions.
- Beware if the individual seems too perfect or quickly asks you to leave a dating service or Facebook to go "offline."
- Beware if the individual attempts to isolate you from friends and family or requests inappropriate photos or financial information that could later be used to extort you.
- Beware if the individual promises to meet in person but then always comes up with an excuse why he or she can't. If you haven't met the person after a few months, for whatever reason, you have good reason to be suspicious.
- Never send money to anyone you don't know personally.

If you believe you are a victim of a romance scam, file a complaint online at [ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov) (<http://www.ic3.gov>).