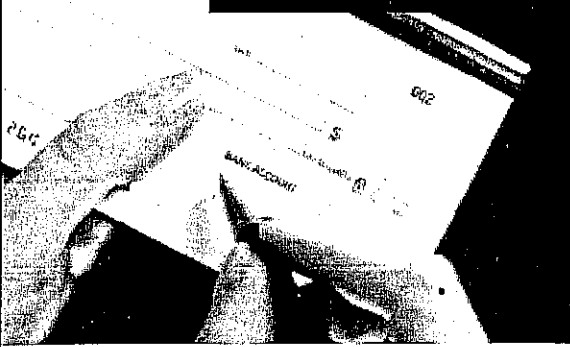


Is this Check for Real?



Fake check scams defraud thousands each year and consumers lose an average of \$5,000. Con artists are looking to gain your trust so they are friendly and very convincing. Learn how the scam works and what are your responsibilities when you deposit a check into a bank account.

Here are sample fake check scams:

- The con artist claims to be from another country and says it's too hard to make payment directly, so they have someone who "owes them money" mail the victim a check. The amount of the check is more than owed, so the victim is instructed to deposit the check and wire the excess back. The check is later found to be fake and the victim is out the money they wired back to the con artist. Remember, there is **no** legitimate reason for someone to ask you to wire money back.
- You've won a lottery and receive a cashier's check or money order. You're asked to return some of the money to pay for taxes, legal fees or other expenses. You deposit the check into your account and it appears legitimate so you mail them a check to pay for "taxes." A few days later, the bank calls and says the check you deposited was fake

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and you need to pay back the money. As a reminder, international checks can take 10 to 15 days or even more to clear.

- A scammer promises to transfer money directly into your bank account. You provide them with your account information, but they mail your bank a check or money order with instructions to place it in your account. When you check your account it looks like the money has arrived electronically, however you later discover it was a fake money order.

Can banks tell if a check is fake?

These checks look very real. Tellers receive a great deal of training on how to spot these checks, but even seasoned bank tellers may be fooled.

Why does the bank give me the money?

Under federal law, banks must make the funds deposited available to their customers usually within one to five days. But just because you can withdraw the money doesn't mean the check is good, even if it's a cashier's check. It could be a forgery, which can take weeks to detect.

What are my responsibilities with checks?

Consumers are responsible for the checks they deposit, because they deal directly with the person who gave them the check. If the check bounces, you owe the bank the money you withdrew. A bank may sue you to recover the money and law enforcement also may get involved if they believe you were involved in the scam.

If you think someone is trying to pull a fake check scam over on you, don't cash the check. Report it to your local law enforcement and the National Consumers League's National Fraud Information Center at www.fraud.org or 800/876-7060.