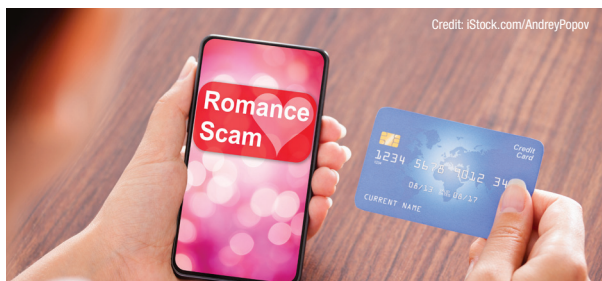




# WHAT IS A ROMANCE SCAM?



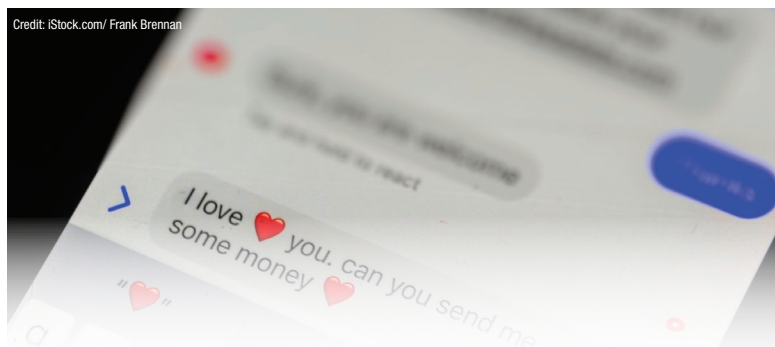
A **romance scam** is a form of confidence scam whereby a scammer gains the trust of a victim by developing a romantic relationship. This relationship usually begins through contact on social media or dating applications.

## Red Flags

- ▶ Scammer may ask victim to send money for travel or business expenses, family emergencies and needs, or for investment opportunities.
- ▶ Scammer may ask victim to open bank accounts to receive money from business associates for projects or investments.
- ▶ Scammer may ask victim to send phones or other expensive items to addresses in the United States or other countries, for example to help a child in school with a laptop.
- ▶ Scammer may ask victim to purchase gift cards and send pictures of the codes via messaging application.
- ▶ Scammer may ask victim for assistance with an added sense of urgency for medical emergencies, death in the family, legal or tax issues, border detainment, etc.



Credit: iStock.com/ BackyardProduction



## How it starts...

- Scammer engages with a potential victim via social media, dating applications, messaging applications, or unsolicited "wrong number" text messages.
- Scammer typically claims to be abroad for work or vacation, or to be from a foreign country.
- Scammer may offer to exchange photos or videos to reassure the victim.
- Scammer continually provides excuses as to why they are unable to meet in person, which is usually due to being abroad, having immigration related issues, or lacking money for travel.
- As the relationship evolves, scammer entices the victim to send personal or financial information, money, gift cards, or electronic devices.



Credit: iStock.com/ alengo

## How can you protect yourself?

- **NEVER** send money to someone you have not met in person.
- **NEVER** open bank accounts or start businesses on behalf of someone else.
- **NEVER** send or receive money on behalf of someone else or to someone else.
- **NEVER** share your personal or financial information.

## BEWARE

- Video calls and messaging applications are not enough proof of their real identity.
- Scammers can engineer proofs using technology (deepfake and artificial intelligence tools), which can appear very convincing.

If you think you are a victim of a **Romance Scam**, contact your local US Secret Service office.  
<https://www.secretservice.gov/contact/field-offices>

