



Charity scams

The set-up

A charity presents you with a need.

The hook

You respond generously, without checking the charity's or collector's credentials.

The sting

There was no charity, your money is gone, and the people in need get nothing.

What a charity scam looks like

You are presented with an opportunity to be generous, and you respond. Unfortunately the charity turns out to be fake or a scammer pretending to be a real charity. You lose your money.

Natural disasters are often the trigger for fake charity scams. Scammers were asking for money immediately after the tsunami and again after the earthquake in Haiti.

Other charity scammers will play on your emotions by presenting you with images and stories about sick children or homeless animals.

Variations on charity scams

Charity lottery scams

Scammers can set up lotteries and sell tickets promoting the idea that the proceeds will be going to charity. If you check the terms and conditions of the lottery, though (which you should always do) you may discover that only a tiny fraction of the money raised goes to charity.

Protect yourself from charity scams

- If you are contacted by a charity you have never heard of before, do some research before saying 'yes' to any appeal.
- If you are approached face-to-face by someone representing a charity, look for official identification. Even if they have ID, check for signs that the ID may be faked.
- Do not be pressured or intimidated or made to feel guilty. Genuine charities would regard such tactics as bad for their reputations.
- Ask for full details of the charity, such as name, address, phone number and charity registration details. If the collector is reluctant to give out this information, find another way to contribute.

Help protect others from charity scams

If you have encountered a dubious charity, please share your story with us. We will treat your report in the strictest confidence and remove your personal details before posting your story on our site.

Report a scam.