

HOW TO SPOT A BOGUS WEBSITE



WHY SHOULD YOU LEARN THIS?

"Quick! There's this amazing deal, if you click here, now! Time's running out, trust us, it's fine!" You've got alarm bells ringing now, haven't you? This is how to avoid those deals that are too good to be true. (And it can also help you know if you've got one that actually IS good.)

WHAT?

Most websites are OK. But a fair number are trying to trick you, and some of those look legit. Don't underestimate your own smarts though, you may already have an uneasy feeling about it from something you've subconsciously spotted. Well done. This is the next step, how to check properly, so you know whether to go ahead or give them the flick.

INSTRUCTIONS:

First you are looking for things that don't add up. Work through the following checklist:

WHAT TO DO:

- 01** Does the website address (URL) match the website name? If not – avoid.
- 02** Does the suffix (the .com, or .biz, or .org bit at the end) match what kind of website it is? Government websites usually have a .gov, while strange-seeming ones aren't good.
Remember .gov, .edu, and .mil suffixes are protected and can only be used by authentic organisations. (You might not like what they say, but they are who they claim to be!) On the other hand, anyone can buy a .org, .com or similar suffix.
So if they tell you it's an official site, but the suffix is .biz or .com – look closely, it might be bogus.
- 03** Hover over any hotlinks on the page (click-with-caution if you're really suspicious!) and see where they're directing you. Does it match what they say it will be? If not, that's a major red flag. Time to leave now.
- 04** How's the spelling, design, graphics? Can you see mistakes or problems with these? Real businesses take a lot of care to avoid these problems, fakes can be very careless, or have poor English or strange wording a company is unlikely to use.



GOT IT?

➤ Test out a website you know is legit. Work through the checklist above. See how it feels correct on all the checks? Run a Google search on a popular brand name and READ the URLs without clicking on the links. Can you see any URLs that look odd? Don't click on them but be aware that they might be fakes.



TRY THIS

If you feel like you've nailed it but you want to level up, try this:

- Talk to friends and see what steps on this list they already know. It might be that you're ahead of them, and can help them out with your knowledge. But ask first. You could be using this skill to stop a mate from getting conned too.
- Read up about online shopping scams at this government website:
www.scamwatch.gov.au/types-of-scams/buying-or-selling/online-shopping-scams

SO WHAT?

- You know there are people out there trying to take advantage of you with their dodgy websites. Now you can just avoid them.

WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE?

- Remember to check any website that tries to get me to react before I think!
- Practise reading the URL including checking its suffix to look for clues that something isn't right.



IF YOU LIKED THIS ONE YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY...

- How to Check Who Owns a Website
- How to Avoid Identity Fraud
- How to Choose Reliable Websites for Research