

FINANCIAL SCAMS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!



"Hi Grandma," says the scammer on the phone, "it's your grandson."

"Tommy....is that you?" says the elderly woman.

"Yes it is. I'm in trouble and I need your help. I don't want to tell my parents because they'll get mad at me. Can you send me some money?"

Sounds far fetched, doesn't it? But it isn't! My own parents have received the dreaded "Hi Grandma" phone call. Now they know better, but the first time, there was some doubt as to whether the story of their grandson in an accident in Atlanta & needing money was true. They ended up not falling for it, but it happens all the time.

Signs Of A Scam:

Too Good To Be True

No, you aren't related to a prince in Nigeria and they aren't trying to give you his inheritance. You know how the old saying goes: If it's too good to be true.....it probably is! Beware of offers that sound like a total unexpected windfall. Think winning a sweepstakes that you didn't even know you entered.

A Sense Of Urgency

The caller or email implores you to act fast! "No need to think about this!" or "The offer expires in 24 hours!" or "The account will be closed if immediate action is not taken"

Sketchy On The Details

They offer little in terms of details on how anything related to the offer would work.

Notifying You Of A "Problem"

They call you wanting to update a credit card on file that you have that is about to expire. You have unpaid toll violations. There's a problem with your computer. A warrant is out for your arrest. Any urgent "problems" that they offer immediate solutions for, usually involving payment, are a sure sign of a scam.

Misspellings Or Unconventional English

Be on the lookout for phrases or words that people don't often use in American English. "Salutations from the bank manager!" or "We kindly request payment" or even "The favour of a rapid reply is requested". Professional organizations take great care with their grammar and spelling, as opposed to scammers that are more interested in putting out scams as fast as possible. They also use vague greetings such as "Dear Customer".

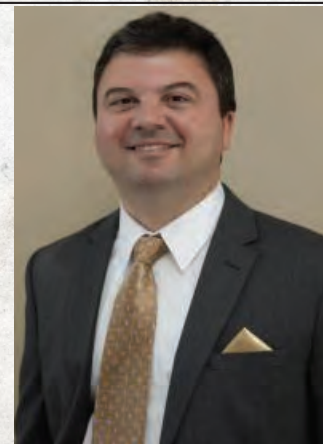
What Are They Looking For?

Any unsolicited requests for the following should raise eyebrows:

- Social Security Numbers, Money requests



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Happy April 2025! April is the first full month of spring, with longer days, warmer weather, and nature in full bloom. April showers bring.....The Masters! You golf lovers know that The Masters is arguably the most prestigious tournament and one of the 4 major championships. It is typically played the first full week of April at Augusta National in Augusta, Georgia. It started back in 1934 and is the only major played at the same place every year. It has been held 87 years with WWII forcing it to take a pause and delayed in 2020 for 7 months due to COVID. There's been 56 unique champions, with Jack Nicklaus winning it a record 6 times. Tiger was the youngest winner at 21 in 1997. Nicklaus was the oldest at 46 in 1986. The Masters is known for presenting the winner with a green jacket, which they don proudly. They keep it for a year before returning it. The event is known for strict etiquette and famously affordable concessions. Augusta National was an all-male club, finally admitting women in 2012. Interesting history.

FORGOTTEN FLORIDA

The Forgotten Coast, is nestled in the panhandle of the Sunshine State. This beautiful region has been called the Forgotten Coast because it's the last remaining stretch of unspoiled, pristine Gulf Coast beaches that haven't been overrun by high rises, strip malls or pattern-planted palm trees. The Forgotten Coast includes the charming communities of Apalachicola, Alligator Point, Carrabelle, St. George Island & Eastpoint.

There's not much there and that's the point. It's quiet and mostly uninhabited. The way Florida used to be. Old Florida. The real Florida. It's appealing because of the unspoiled beauty and the laid back vibe.

Pristine Beaches: Miles of white-sand beaches like those on St. George Island and Cape San Blas are less crowded, ideal for relaxing or shelling.

Outdoor Adventures: World-class fishing, kayaking, & hiking abound, with spots like Apalachicola National Forest & St. Joe's Bay's clear waters for snorkeling & scalloping.

Historic Charm: Quaint towns like Apalachicola, with historic oyster industry & waterfront, combine Southern hospitality with gems like art galleries & seafood festivals.

Culinary Delights: Fresh Gulf seafood, especially oysters, is a draw with local restaurants serving up authentic coastal cuisine.

Low-Key Vibe: No high-rises & chain resorts, it's a haven for those seeking a slower pace.

The area is recovering from hurricanes like Helene, with resilient communities and welcomes visitors to support local businesses. It's perfect for nature lovers, history buffs, or anyone craving a serene escape.



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- Bank Account Details, Credit Card Numbers. Password and PINs
- Personal Identifying Details (birthday, mother's maiden name)

How To Protect Yourself:

Verify independently any suspicious correspondence you receive. Hover over links but **don't click on them.** This action will allow you to see the actual URL in the bottom corner of your browser. Check if it matches what you would expect from the legit source. **Inspect email addresses.** Look at the part of the email address after the "@" symbol. A scam email might use a domain that's similar to, but not exactly the same as, the real organization's domain (e.g., "@yah00.com instead of yahoo.com). Always be cautious with personal information. **Use strong passwords and 2-factor authentication,** be cautious with public wifi, and always monitor your accounts!



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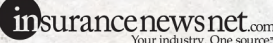
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Evenings and Saturdays available by scheduling at totalfinancialplanning.com/schedule-call

I have been quoted in the following publications:



Flashback 25 Years Ago This Month

MOVIES: April 2000

- **Rules of Engagement**....An attorney (Tommy Lee Jones) defends an officer (Samuel L Jackson) on trial for ordering his troops to fire on civilians after they stormed a U.S. embassy in a Middle Eastern country.
- **Erin Brockovich**.....A flamboyant law firm secretary (Julia Roberts) works tirelessly to gain justice for a small town wrecked by a utility company's pollution.
- **U-571**.....A German submarine is boarded by disguised American submariners (Matthew McConaughey, Bill Paxton) trying to capture their Enigma cipher machine.



MUSIC

Billboard Hot 100: April 2000!!

- Say My Name (Destiny's Child)
- Breathe (Faith Hill)
- Bye Bye Bye (N'Sync)
- I Try (Macy Gray)
- Smooth (Santana, Rob Thomas)
- Show Me The Meaning Of Being Lonely (Backstreet Boys)



NEWS/SPORTS/CELEBRITY

- 1st regular season MLB games at Enron Field (now Minute Maid Park) in Houston. Pacific Bell Park (now Oracle Park) in San Francisco, California and Comerica Park in Detroit, Michigan also open.
- Metallica files a lawsuit against Peer-2-Peer sharing phenomenon Napster. This lawsuit eventually leads the movement against file-sharing programs.
- My lovely and intelligent daughter Lauren was born!!
- In a pre-dawn raid, federal agents seize six-year-old Elián González from his relatives' home in Miami, Florida.
- Giant Sequoia National Monument proclamation signed by President Clinton in California, preserving 1/3 of all giant sequoia groves, the world's largest tree
- David Hogg, American gun control activist and author who as a student survived the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, born in Parkland, Fl.
- Vermont was the first state to establish civil unions for same-sex couples



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Questions? Call Alexis' cell 407-729-8516

IRS AUDITS:

How Do They Work?

You diligently submitted your return to the IRS. Great! How does the IRS determine if they will audit it? Here's how:

They use something called a "Discriminant Function System" (DFS).

To begin with, they match their records with what you submitted. SSNs, W-2s, 1099s etc. Were they correctly reported?

Then the DFS kicks in. They score you based on your age, profession, income, deductions you claim etc. Do you have a lot of uncommon deductions? In essence, they compare your return to those that they know have cheated in the past. If it's very similar, they think there's a good chance you cheated too!

They identify techniques scammers use and see if you are using them.

If you do business with others whose returns are questionable, they'll flag yours too!

Certain tax credits are abused and the IRS knows this. An example is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). People often abuse residency, relationship & other tests to claim this credit. The IRS wants to take a closer look at returns that claim EITC when compared to returns that don't claim this.

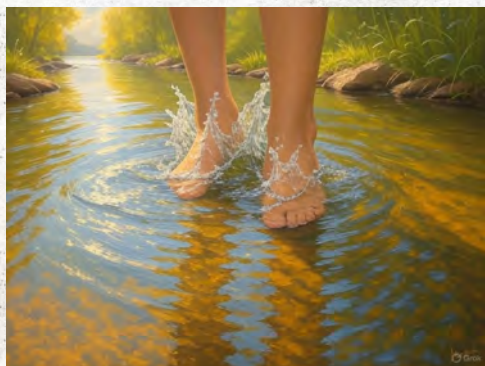
You are responsible for your return, so thinking the burden of proof is on the IRS to "prove" you are guilty is incorrect. You need to prove, in theory, every single number you put on your return. Not them.

The chances of an audit are small, but they do happen. Just be honest and report your information correctly and you generally won't have an issue.

**IRS
Audit**

Idiom Of The Month

"GET YOUR FEET WET"



"Getting your feet wet" means trying something new at a cautious pace. It is the complete opposite of "diving in head first" which signals an "all-in" approach without second thoughts.

Its origins are tied to the literal act of wading slowly into water, where getting your feet wet marks the beginning of a deeper plunge. Before you can swim, you get your feet wet.

The phrase's common use comes from the Book of Joshua. It was God who instructed Joshua to command the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to step into the Jordan River. This wasn't for cleansing their feet in a pool of water, but rather to initiate a miracle where the waters of the Jordan parted, allowing the Israelites to cross on dry ground into the Promised Land. You start something by getting your feet wet.

According to another theory, the idiom originated in ancient Rome, where the anointing ritual for Caesar's army was to get their feet wet before trying anything new in battle. This strategy played well for the Roman empire, and it's even considered influential in the Roman

church.

It is commonly used in contexts like learning a trade, for example.

The phrase's common use comes from its vivid imagery: wet feet signal beginning a commitment without full immersion, a perfect analogy for taking first steps in anything unfamiliar.



FINANCIAL TRIVIA

1. When the stock market index S&P 500 is referenced in the U.S., technically "S&P" no longer stands for anything. However, what did these two letters previously stand for?
2. Which type of stock is higher-up on the chain of claim than common stock, but not as high up as bonds?
3. Which industrial average shows you how 30 top stocks in the United States are performing and serves as a benchmark that you can compare your investments to?
4. If you're borrowing money to finance your business and you want to know how much interest you'll pay on it in a year, look for the APR. What is APR an acronym for?
5. What document can be defined as a statement of financial position, listing a company's assets, liabilities, and equity? It can be used to determine financial return and a business's capital structure.
6. Which Minnesota-based S&P 500 company has the NYSE ticker symbol "MMM"?
7. The DAX is a stock index based in what Western European superpower?
8. The Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) is a non-profit "standard-setting body" that establishes and improves the set of accounting principles used in the U.S. and known by what four-letter acronym?
9. What is the initial lump sum you pay when you obtain a mortgage to buy a house?
10. Both the tax preparation application TurboTax and the small business accounting program QuickBooks are products owned and sold by what publicly traded company?

Answers:

1. Standards & Poor's
2. Preferred
3. Dow Jones
4. Annual Percentage Rate
5. Balance Sheet
6. 3M
7. Germany
8. GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles)
9. Down payment
10. Intuit