



POLICE
SCOTLAND
POILEAS ALBA

Social Media Marketplace Frauds

Cybercrime Harm Preventions Team

Police Scotland

04.03.25



How does a Social Media Marketplace work?

Facebook Marketplace is the most popular online marketplace which allows you to buy and sell items.

It lets you browse a relevant feed of things to buy from people. It also lets you list your own belongings for sale.

You can list of things for sale and make an offer for items another seller has posted by using your existing Facebook profile.

The drawback is that there isn't an in-built payment feature, so it's down to you to arrange payment or meet up in person.

Is it Safe?

Facebook doesn't verify the products for sale on its platform, so it's a good idea to check anything you want to buy in person before handing over your cash.

As always with online sales, if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is.

It is best practice to check independent reviews of anything you want to buy online. It is also a good idea to check if the product has been subject to a product recall, or if a safety notice has been issued.

A person's profile information, or lack of, could also give you a clue as to whether you want to meet them in person.

How to Buy Safely

Avoid advance payment: try to avoid paying for anything without having seen it.

Take a screenshot: it's a good idea to take a screenshot of the listing to keep a record of how the product was described when you purchased it. That way you have evidence should there be a dispute.

Buy for the right price: check other sites, such as Amazon, eBay, Gumtree, to see if the price is fair or if you could find what you're looking for cheaper elsewhere. It's also worth comparing the difference in cost of buying new versus second hand.

Check the profile of the person you're buying from: consider whether there's cause for concern - for example, you might want to check whether:

- the profile has been set up very recently
- there are lots of grammatical and spelling errors
- they've not been tagged in any photos - a real person usually will have been
- none of their Facebook friends are in their local area. The more global their friendship list, with very few or no local friends, the more suspicious.

How to Sell Safely

When selling on online marketplaces always remain vigilant against potential frauds. Here are some essential tips to help sellers avoid falling victim to deceptive tactics:

Verify Buyer Identities – Verifying a buyer's identity can be difficult, therefore, be wary of profiles with no display picture and very few friends or no buying/selling history. Be cautious of requests for sensitive information and scrutinise orders from unfamiliar or suspicious accounts.

Secure Payment Methods – Utilise secure payment methods, preferably your credit card for extra protection, to minimise the risk of fraudulent transactions. Avoid unconventional payment requests and always confirm payment before shipping any products.

Watch for Fake Payment Confirmation Emails – Be wary of fake confirmation emails that may appear legitimate. Always log in to your payment platform directly to verify transactions rather than relying solely on email notifications.

Scammer tells you they'll send a courier to collect the item – The buyer will say they can't come in person to collect the item, so will send a courier with a company

in their stead. They may even send you a link to a fake website or an inauthentic email. The scammer will then ask you to pay for insurance for the safe delivery of the item. After you've entered your card details or made a payment, they'll disappear.

Stay Informed about Common Scams – Educate yourself on common scams prevalent in online marketplaces. Awareness is key to recognising potential threats and adapting your selling strategies to mitigate risks – [Scam Share - Trading Standards Scotland \(tsscot.co.uk\)](https://www.tsscot.co.uk)

Report Suspicious Activity – If you encounter any suspicious activity or believe you may be a target of a scam, promptly report it to the online marketplaces support team and your bank, if required. Early reporting helps protect both you and other sellers on the platform.

Remember, stay informed, remain vigilant and adapt your practices to evolving threats in the online marketplace.

Your Rights

When you buy from an individual the [Consumer Rights Act](#) says that the goods you get must be as they were described to you by the seller.

For example, something second hand should not be described as new. If it is, the seller will be in breach of contract.

If a seller takes your money but doesn't send you anything, or if a buyer takes your item without paying, this will also be a clear breach of contract.

Reporting Sellers

Facebook says buyers also have the option of [reporting sellers who 'aren't acting in good faith'](#).

It says it will 'quickly review and take the appropriate action, which could range from removing a post to banning someone from Facebook altogether'.

Other Types of Marketplace Frauds

Rental Fraud

Rental fraud is a concerning practice that frequently occurs on online marketplaces, targeting individuals seeking accommodation. Scammers exploit unsuspecting individuals by requesting upfront fees without providing an opportunity to view the property. Unfortunately, the advertised property may not exist, might already be rented or may have been leased to multiple victims.

Protect yourself from Rental Fraud on Online Marketplaces:

- Only send money to people advertising rental properties online once you are sure the advertiser is genuine.
- If you need to secure accommodation across the country ask a friend, contact or relative to physically check if the property exists and is available.
- Only make payment once you or a reliable contact has visited the property with an agent or the landlord.
- Don't be pressured into transferring large sums of money. Be sceptical if you're asked to send money via a money transfer service.

When exploring the online marketplace for rental properties, always remain vigilant. By verifying advertisers, seeking assistance from family and friends, and making payments only after physical verification, you can protect yourself from falling victim to rental fraud. Remember, a cautious approach ensures that your online marketplace experience remains secure and your pursuit of accommodation is free from scammers.

Ticket Fraud

Ticket fraud is a prevalent scam on online marketplaces, particularly targeting individuals purchasing tickets for live events. Fraudsters create fake listings, offering tickets to concerts or sports events that are either fraudulent or entirely non-existent.

The following signs may indicate ticket fraud on online marketplaces:

- Receiving offers via email or direct message within the marketplace
- Being offered tickets for high-demand or sold-out events at unrealistically low prices

OFFICIAL

- Being asked to pay exclusively by bank transfer, avoiding secure payment methods provided by the online marketplace
- Identifying a listing resembling a genuine organisation but with subtle changes to the URL
- Being told that a customer representative will meet you outside the venue, a common tactic employed by scammers within online marketplaces

Useful Links

[Phishing: Spot and report scam emails, texts, websites and... - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

[Phishing: Spot and report scam emails, texts, websites and... - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

[Cyber Aware - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

[My digital footprint | NPSA](#)

[Online Shopping - Trading Standards Scotland \(tsscot.co.uk\)](#)