

Avoiding ID Theft and Scams

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What is a Smart Consumer ?

- Avoids scams and fraud
- Does research before buying
- Gets good deals/value for money spent
- Knows where to complain if needed
- “If it sounds too good to be true, it is!”





Avoid Scams

- Work at home
- ID theft
- Car buying-Craig's List
- Fake check
- Foreign lotteries
- Employment services
- Private career schools

Avoid Scams

- Car repair—unlicensed and “parking lot repairs”
- Home improvement
- Door-to-door sales
- Secured credit card scams
- Credit repair scams
- Overpayment for sale/service

Research

- Consumer Reports
- Online reviews
- Comparison shopping
- Washington Consumers Checkbook
- Check complaint records



Getting a Good Deal

- Check coupons—only if they make sense for you
- Ask for discount
- Know competitor's prices
- Check discount stores-find what day new merchandise comes in
- Be willing to walk away
- Check your receipts

Quiz - Common Consumer Issues

- If you buy an item, have the receipt and tags on it, you can return it to the store within 30 days?
- If you buy an item that is defective and the store has a no-refund policy, you are out of luck?
- If you sign a contract to purchase furniture, you have 3 days to “cool off” and cancel the contract?
- You can return a car purchase within 24 hours
- Sale Prices are always lower?

Quiz-Common Consumer Issues

- You should select a car repair shop before the car has any problems?
- If you have an item that has been recalled, you will get your money back?
- Thrift stores check for recalls before selling items?
- If a store advertises a sale item, but is out of it when you go there, they are required to give you a rain check?

Quiz - Common Consumer Issues

- Rent to Own is an easy way to buy furniture?
- It's convenient and accurate to get estimates from moving companies over the phone?
- A "Lifetime Warranty" means it covers the item during your lifetime?
- It's a good idea to use a scholarship search company if they guarantee they can find me a scholarship?

Buying a Used Car

- Research car—Consumer Reports; NHTSA recalls; Kelley Blue Book
- Choose where to buy carefully. Check complaint records for dealers. If buying from individual, check repair service orders and title for name match
- Consider getting a CarFax report
- Have a mechanic check it out
- Test drive

Money Savings Tips

- Check clothes shopping on eBay
- Bag lunch
- Pack for trips—bottled water at 7-11 etc
- Check on your employee discount
- Use coupons—online shopping; online grocery coupons, restaurant coupons; Groupon



Money Savings Tips

- Watch how much cash you carry
- Save change
- Rent textbooks
- Make a list before shopping
- Choose a mechanic before problems occur
- Watch magazines—renewals
- Use the library—DVD's etc

Money Savings Tips

- Watch gym memberships
- Check cell phone plan—texting etc.
- Use the 10-second rule before buying
- Gift of service—babysitting etc.
- Cut down on fees
- Choose credit carefully
- Other ideas?



Consumer Help

- Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer
240-777-3635
- Maryland Attorney General, Consumer Protection Division
<http://www.oag.state.md.us/consumer>
888-743-0023
- Federal Trade Commission
www.ftc.gov

Questions?