

# Tips: Avoiding rental scams

Looking for a place to rent? In the process of finding a rental home, be aware that there are scammers who try to trick people into paying for places that either don't exist or are completely different to the photos in the advertisement. Here are some tips to help protect you from rental scams.

## 1. Always inspect the property in person

Before you hand over any money, make sure you or someone you trust has seen the place **in real life**. If someone says, 'I'm overseas' or 'I can't show you the place, just pay a deposit first' that's a huge red flag. Legitimate landlords or agents should organise a proper inspection.

## 2. Never pay with gift cards, cash, or crypto

Scammers often ask for money in unusual ways – like gift cards, Bitcoin, or cash. **Don't do it**. Use proper payment methods like credit card, BPay or secure payment platforms (some of which offer fraud protection). If someone is asking you to pay in a strange way, it's probably a scam.

## 3. Check the identity of the landlord or agent

Always ask for **proof of ID** and check that real estate agents actually work for a **registered real estate agency**. You can look them up on the [Service NSW website](#) or call the agency to confirm. If they get annoyed or refuse to prove who they are – that's suspicious.

If you ever receive a letter or email from the real estate agent asking you to **change where to pay your rent**, make sure it is really from the agent.

## 4. Stick to trusted rental websites

It is better to use well-known websites like [domain.com.au](#) or [realestate.com.au](#) to find a rental. Be careful on sites like Facebook Marketplace or Gumtree – they're not always monitored, and scammers love to post fake rental listings there.

## 5. Search the images and text shown

A **reverse image search** might show that the property is a stock image, or outdoor environments that don't match the area they're advertised in (e.g. apartment buildings where there should be houses). Similarly, you could cut and paste the content of the listing into a search engine. If it's a popular scam, it will often be in more than one place.

## 6. Be wary of deals that seem too good to be true

If the place looks amazing and the rent is very low, ask yourself: 'Why?' Scammers often use 'too good to be true' listings to get attention. If something feels off, trust your gut. As the saying goes, 'if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.'

## 7. Get receipts

Always get a **receipt** for any payments like holding fees, rent in advance or bond payments. If possible, lodge your bond yourself at [Rental Bonds Online](#) rather than through the real estate agent or landlord.

Before paying rent in advance or bond, get a copy of the **residential tenancy agreement (lease)**. Scammers avoid paperwork because they know it can get them caught.

See [Factsheet: Starting a Tenancy](#) for more information on fees payable at the start of a tenancy, and [Factsheet: Bond](#).

## 8. When in doubt, ask for help

If anything feels dodgy, contact [NSW Fair Trading](#) or your [local Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service](#). They can give free advice and help you stay safe.

## 9. Report potential scammers

If you suspect a scam, take a screenshot of the original post and keep screenshots or copies of all communications (e.g. text messages, emails or WhatsApp conversations) as they might be important later.

If you know the name of the business or trader, you can [make an online complaint to NSW Fair Trading](#) or call 13 32 20. If you're not sure where the scammers are from, or if it's an international or interstate scam, contact the ACCC's Infocentre on 1300 302 502 or [SCAMwatch](#). You could also report it to the police and the website you found it on. This could help warn other renters against the scam.

## 10. Minimise your losses

If you have given any of your personal or financial details to a potential scammer, contact the authorities immediately. **Advise your financial institutions as quickly as possible** if your accounts have been compromised. You may be able to stop a transfer or prevent any further charges. You may also want to reset your online banking and financial passwords.

## In summary

- Don't rush into anything – scammers often try to create a sense of urgency
- Don't pay money before inspecting.
- Double check the details of the people you are dealing with.
- Use proper payment methods with fraud protection.
- Always get a receipt for any money paid.
- Ask for help if you're unsure.

Being careful now can save you a lot of stress (and money) later. Renting a new place should be exciting – not risky!

## More info

- Factsheets: [Starting a tenancy](#), [Rent payment](#), [Bond](#)
- [New Renters Kit](#)
- [Podcast episode: Getting a foot in the door](#)
- [Easy read fact sheet: When you start to rent](#)
- [SCAMwatch](#) (Australian government)

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**For free advice, call your local Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service:**

### SYDNEY:

• Eastern	9386 9147
• Inner	9698 5975
• Inner West	9559 2899
• Northern	9559 2899
• Southern	9787 4679
• South West	4628 1678
• Western	8833 0933

### REGIONAL:

• Blue Mountains	4704 0201
• Central Coast	4353 5515
• Hunter	4969 7666
• Illawarra Sth Coast	4274 3475
• Mid Coast	6583 9866
• Northern Rivers	6621 1022
• Northwest NSW	1800 836 268
• Southwest NSW	1300 483 786

### ABORIGINAL:

• Sydney	9833 3314
• West NSW	6881 5700
• South NSW	1800 672 185
• North NSW	1800 248 913

**WEB:** [tenants.org.au](https://tenants.org.au)

**NSW FAIR TRADING:** 13 32 20

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