

ROMANCE IMPOSTOR SCAMS

How Criminals Exploit Trust to Steal Money

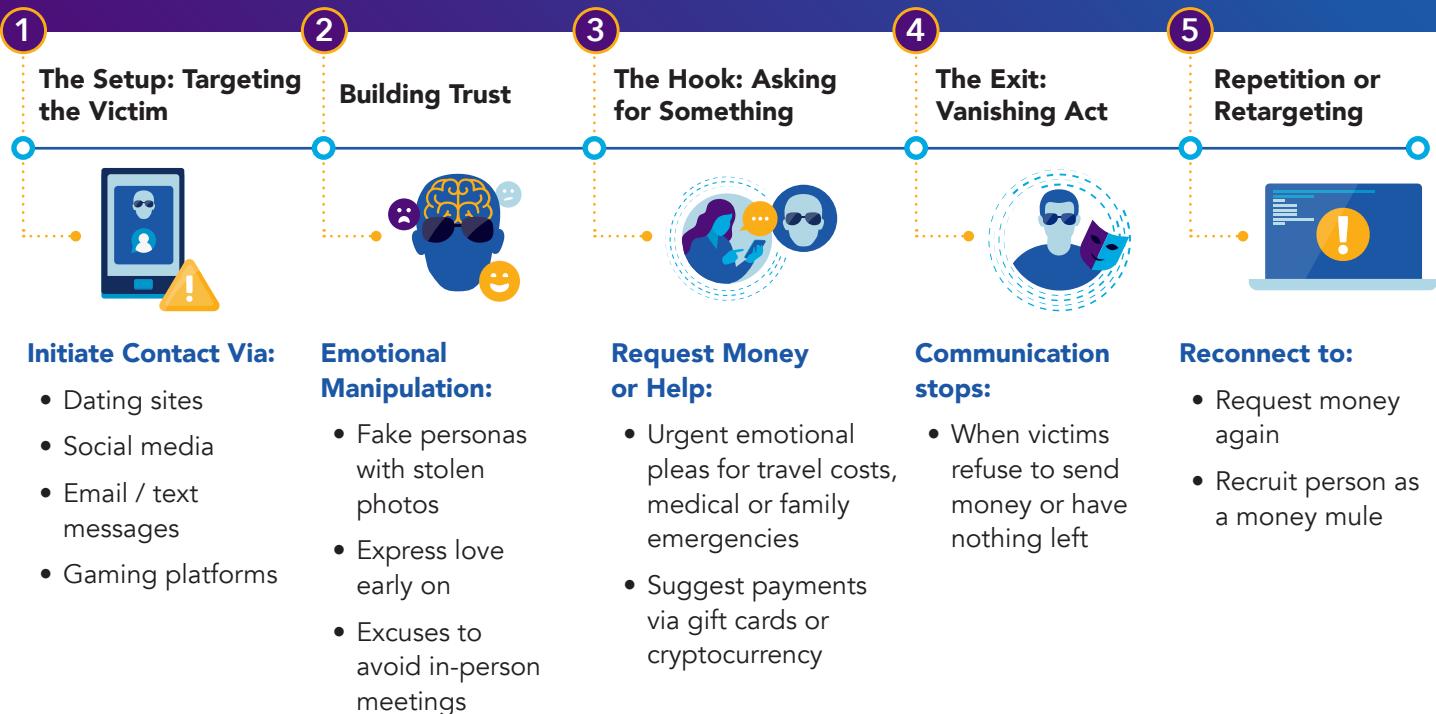
Understanding how romance impostor scams operate and recognizing their warning signs is crucial to avoiding financial and emotional impacts. This document outlines common tactics used by criminals to manipulate victims psychologically and provides guidance on how to identify and avoid romance impostor scams.

WHAT IS A ROMANCE IMPOSTOR SCAM?*

The use of a fictitious online identity to establish a trusted relationship (romance or friendship) with another person with the intent to request money by using a false situation to create a sense of urgency.



HOW SCAMS OCCUR: THE BASIC STEPS



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Steps to spot and avoid romance impostor scams

Starting a Relationship

- Reverse image search profile photos
- Use trusted, verified platforms
- Keep personal info private

During the Relationship

- Beware of moving chats off-site
- Confide in someone you trust
- Never send money – ever

Protect Financial Information

- Don't share account or card details
- Never deposit checks or accept funds

IF YOU SUSPECT A SCAM

- **Step away** from the situation to regain control of your emotions
- **Stop all communication** with the individual
- **Seek support** from trusted family members or friends
- **Notify your financial institution** of any payments sent or received
- **Report payments** to your local police department if you've sent money
- **Report the scam** to the [Federal Trade Commission](#) (Off-site) and the [FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center \(IC3\)](#) (Off-site)



"My love interest wasn't a stranger. They gave me hope for future happiness. I had doubts, but the emotions were strong enough that I ignored the warning signs."

Additional information is available in the Scams Mitigation Toolkit at this [link](#):

*Definition of romance impostor scam is taken from the [ScamClassifier Model and Definitions](#).

The scams mitigation toolkit was developed by the Federal Reserve to help educate the industry about scams and outline potential ways to help detect and mitigate this fraud type. Insights for this toolkit were provided through interviews with industry experts, publicly available research, and team member expertise. This toolkit is not intended to result in any regulatory or reporting requirements, imply any liabilities for fraud loss, or confer any legal status, legal definitions, or legal rights or responsibilities. While use of this toolkit throughout the industry is encouraged, utilization of the toolkit is voluntary at the discretion of each individual entity. Absent written consent, this toolkit may not be used in a manner that suggests the Federal Reserve endorses a third-party product or service.